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The life of Thomas M'Crie,  
D.D.



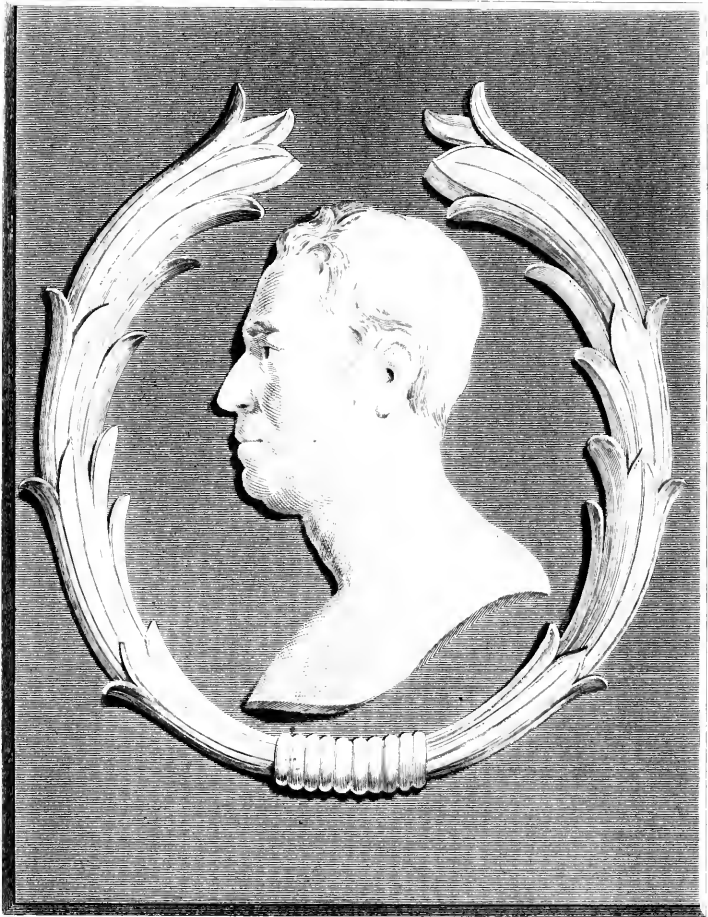












Yours very truly  
Thos. W. Price

L I F E

OF

THOMAS M'CRIE, D. D.,

AUTHOR OF

"LIFE OF JOHN KNOX," "LIFE OF MELVILLE,"  
ETC., ETC.

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BY HIS SON,  
THE REV. THOMAS M'CRIE.

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Philadelphia:  
WILLIAM S. YOUNG, 173 RACE STREET,

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1842.

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## P R E F A C E.

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THE Author of these Memoirs feels that he owes some apology to the Public for the size to which this Volume has extended, as well as for his delay in bringing it out. His original intention was to have prefixed a brief notice of the principal events in his father's life to the volume of his Sermons which he edited in 1836. From this he was dissuaded at the time by many of his friends, who strenuously advised him to devote more time to the task, representing to him the impropriety of publishing a hurried and superficial sketch, which could only gratify an ephemeral curiosity, without doing justice to the character and life of his highly valued parent. The materials necessary for such a task were evidently such as none but a near relative could gain access to, or be properly qualified to deal with. Once embarked in the undertaking, the Author found these materials daily accu-

mulating on his hands; and the consequence is, that it has expanded as he advanced, till it has reached a size far beyond what was anticipated by himself, even after the printing had commenced. Meanwhile, various avocations, which it is needless to enumerate, but from which he could not well escape, have occupied, or broken his time to such a degree, that he has not had many more months to devote to the present task, than the number of years that have elapsed since he undertook it; and even yet, he is aware that he requires the indulgence of his readers for having preferred to gratify the wishes of the public, though at the risk of disappointing their expectations, rather than to attempt, by a farther postponement of the publication, to render it better deserving of their favour.

The Author has not felt, and hopes he has not shown himself, insensible to the delicacy of his undertaking,—a consideration which nothing but a conviction of duty could have enabled him to overcome. He is quite aware of the disadvantages under which he labours, on the score of near relationship; but he trusts that he has not brought himself, to any



material extent, under the suspicion of undue partiality; and he has endeavoured, as far as possible, to escape this charge, by the plan which he has adopted, of allowing the subject of his Memoirs to speak, in a great measure, for himself, or of finding others to speak for him.—“Personal knowledge,” says Southey, in his Life of Cowper, “is, indeed, the greatest of all advantages for such an undertaking, notwithstanding the degree of restraint which must generally be regarded as one of its conditions. But when his letters are accessible, the writer may in great part be made his own biographer,—more fully, and perhaps more faithfully, than if he had composed his own memoirs, even with the most sincere intentions. For in letters, feelings, and views, and motives are related as they existed at the time; whereas, in retrospect, much must of necessity be overlooked, and much be lost.”

Dr. M'Crie never kept a private Diary. The letters addressed to himself, many of them from the first literary characters of the age, accumulated to such an inconvenient excess, that, with few exceptions in favour of

private friends, they were all, at certain intervals, committed to the flames. To his own letters, therefore, the biographer had chiefly to look for his materials; and these, it is believed, will be considered the most interesting parts of the Memoir.

In tracing the public life of Dr. M'Crie, his memorialist has been obliged to tread occasionally over very delicate and debatable ground; and he can truly say, that he has endeavoured, to the utmost of his power, to avoid hurting the feelings of any, or mingling the acrimony of party-spirit with his accounts of the controversies, more recent or more remote, in which his father was involved. With regard to the most painful of these—the breach of 1806—it was not the Author's original purpose to have enlarged near so much as he has done; but late attempts to revive misrepresentations which he conceived had been completely set at rest, left him no other alternative than either to suffer these to pass as acknowledged truths, or to give a plain unvarnished statement of the facts as they occurred. The mantle of delicacy and forbearance, with which he was at first disposed

to cover the scenes of that period, having been torn away by other hands, the disclosures now made are no more than what were absolutely necessary for the ends of justice, whether as regards the subject of these Memoirs, or the transactions in which he took a part.

The Author is painfully conscious how little justice he has done to the important topics and events connected with the life of his father; but into many of these he has purposely abstained from entering; having all along written under the impression that he was merely preparing what the early French writers call "*Memoires pour servir à l'histoire,*" or furnishing his contribution for the guidance of the future historian of the Church, in treating of the period embraced by the Life,—a period to which we of the present age live too close, perhaps, to form either a full or an unbiassed judgment.

The Author has now only to return his thanks to those of his own, and his father's friends, who have so kindly aided and enriched his work, by furnishing him with his father's letters; and to express his hope, that

this humble attempt to complete the picture which Dr. M'Crie's writings afford of his mind and character, may, at least, not be regarded as detracting from the high fame which these writings have acquired for him, in the world of literature and of religion.

EDINBURGH, *April* 21, 1840.

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THE  
LIFE OF DR. M'CRIE.

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CHAPTER I.

FROM HIS BIRTH TO HIS SETTLEMENT IN EDINBURGH.  
1772-1796.

DR. M'CRIE was born at Dunse, the county town of Berwickshire, in November 1772.\* He was the eldest of a large family, consisting of four sons and three daughters, of whom only one of the daughters now survives. His father, Thomas M'Crie, was a manufacturer and merchant in Dunse, and, by his industry, acquired a small property in the neighbourhood of Coldingham; but spent his latter days in his native town, where he died, March 6th, 1823, in the seventy-eighth year of his age. He was a strictly religious man, noted for his shrewd intelligence and a species of caustic humour, and much respected by all who knew him.

His mother, Mary Hood, was the daughter of Mr. John Hood, a respectable farmer in the vicinity of Dunse, and allied to different families of that name who still follow the same occupation in Berwickshire and East Lothian. She was a woman of a superior mind, of exemplary piety, and the most amiable dis-

\* His birth-day cannot be ascertained with certainty. He himself paid no regard to it. The parish register records the date of his baptism, "22d November, 1772." The index to the register places it under 1774, and this error has found its way into the New Statistical Account of Scotland. Those who are fond of topographical associations, may be reminded that Dunse was the birth-place of two men of note in their respective periods, though on very different accounts,—Duns Scotus, the famed scholastic doctor of the 14th century; and Thomas Boston, author of "The Fourfold State,"—whom Dr. M'Crie reckoned the most useful writer that Scotland ever produced.

positions. From his father he appears to have inherited a vigorous constitution and a masculine understanding; from his mother, the almost feminine sensibility of his nature. The mutual attachment between this truly excellent mother and her first-born, was of no ordinary kind. He has been frequently heard to trace to her example, her instructions, and her prayers, his first serious impressions of religion; and to relate, with much feeling, how deeply he was affected by what he heard at a female prayer-meeting, to which her kind hand conducted him when he was a mere child.\* Nor did he fail, on his part, in his duty to this affectionate parent; he would spend the time allotted by other boys of his age to play, in watching the sick bed of his mother, who was long in delicate health, and even aiding her in the performance of domestic duties. To use the expression of an old servant of the family, who is still alive, "he was aye manly in his carriage,"—as an instance of which, she recollects of his being employed, in the absence of his father, to conduct the family worship, and catechise the servants, when he could be little more than ten years of age.

Dr. M'Crie's parents being connected with that branch of the Secession usually termed Antiburghers, he was brought up under the ministry of the Rev. Mr. Whyte, at a period when the primitive strictness of that communion was retained in a measure which is now almost unknown.† In these circumstances, he received that thoroughly religious education, of the importance of which he was ever afterwards so strenuous an advocate, and of the success of which he was himself a striking example. His own incli-

\* One of her servants remembers well the advice she received from her "quiet and pleasant mistress:" "Begin the day with God; and take a little time to yourself, before beginning my work."

† He used to mention, with a smile, the first two questions generally put to children in his younger days: "Which is the best book in the world?" "*The Bible.*" "Which is the next best?" "*The Confession of Faith.*"

nation, coinciding with the ardent wishes of his mother, led him, at a very early period, to choose the profession of the sacred ministry, and to direct his studies toward that object. He was taught the elements of classical education by Mr. Crookshanks, parish schoolmaster of Dunse. At this time, his avidity in the pursuit of learning attracted the notice of all around him. Sedate and studious in his habits, he would often retire to the fields, and there, not only forsaking his companions, but forfeiting his ordinary meals, he would spend the live-long day in poring over his books. With such application, his progress, it may well be supposed, was rapid, and advanced beyond what is common in one of his years; and he thus acquired in his youth that classical taste which is rarely the attainment of those who commence their studies at a later period of life.

Another circumstance which had a powerful influence in confirming and enlarging his early acquisitions, may be here noticed. His father discouraged the prosecution of his studies, declaring, from a feeling not very common among Scottish parents, in much more limited circumstances, that he "would not make a gentleman of one of his sons, at the expense of the rest;" and it was only through the kind interference of his maternal grandfather, and other relations, that he was allowed to proceed in his literary career. Thus encouraged, however, he threw himself on his own resources; and with a manliness and resolution little to be expected at his time of life, he earned for himself the ways and means by which, with the occasional help of his friends, who discovered the promising abilities of the future historian, he was enabled to meet the expenses of his education. Before he was fifteen years of age, he taught successively two country schools in the neighbourhood of Dunse. In 1788 he acted for a short time as usher in the parish school of Kelso, and shortly afterwards served in the same capacity in East Linton. While employed in these situations, every one was struck with the extremely youthful appearance of

“the dominic,” who was, in fact, little older than the boys whom he taught, and with whom he would join in their out-door amusements; though, during school hours, he maintained over them the most perfect control. It might be mentioned here, perhaps, that, with all his fondness for study, he delighted and excelled in rural sports, could lend a hand in the lighter labours of the farm, and was famed for his feats in horsemanship; thus giving proof of that activity and boldness, for the display of which he afterwards found a very different field.

The following incident, which marked the commencement of Dr. M'Crie's academical course, presents an appropriate close to that precious maternal tuition of which we have already spoken. On his first setting out to attend the University of Edinburgh, his mother accompanied him part of the way, and before taking leave of him, led him into a field near the road, on Coldingham Moor, and kneeling down with him behind a rock, affectionately and solemnly devoted him to the service, and commended him to the fatherly care, of his covenant God. The Christian reader alone can appreciate this affecting scene:—it was not Amilcar swearing Hannibal to perpetual war against the Romans; it was Hannah, the pious mother of Samuel, “lending her son to the Lord.” In the following year, he was deprived of this invaluable parent, and the tidings of her death having reached him in Edinburgh, before he had received any information of her last illness, the event proved one of the most poignant afflictions of his life. He seldom, even long afterwards, spoke of her without the tear of filial affection; and down to the termination of his own course, his very dreams indicated the hold which her memory retained on every grateful feeling of his heart.

When sixteen years of age, he became a student in the University of Edinburgh, in December 1788, —a year marked in the annals of the Secession by the death of the Rev. Adam Gib, the John Knox of his day in that denomination, both as a popular powerful preacher, and a bold unflinching champion

of the principles of the Reformation. During this session, and the two immediately succeeding, he attended, in their usual order, the Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Mathematics, Logic, and Moral Philosophy classes. The names of Hill, Dalzell, Playfair, and Finlayson, he honoured with modest respect; but, like all his contemporaries, he was fascinated with the *beau ideal* of academical eloquence which adorned the Moral Chair in the person of Dugald Stewart. Long after he had sat under his admired teacher, he would describe with rapture his early emotions, while looking on the handsomely erect and elastic figure of the professor, in every attitude a model for the statuary, listening to expositions, whether of facts or principles, always clear as the transparent stream, and charmed by the tones of a voice which modulated into spoken music every expression of intelligence and feeling. An esteemed friend of his happening to say to him some years ago, "I have been hearing Dr. Brown lecture with all the eloquence of Dugald Stewart." "No, Sir," he exclaimed, with an air of almost Johnsonian decision, "you have not, and no man ever will."

It seems but justice to acknowledge that Dr. M'Crie was more indebted to the eloquent Professor of Moral Philosophy, than to any other of his college teachers. The scholar, indeed, found reason to dissent from several of the doctrines of his master, in their bearing on theology; but he could appreciate the value of that philosopher's anti-skeptical common-sense strain of philosophy, and sympathized with the glowing ardour in behalf of civil liberty, which gave power and pathos to some of his most eloquent lectures. The high polish of manner and diction which distinguish the works of an author whom Englishmen have characterized as the best English writer in Scotland, and the finest philosophical writer in Britain, he either sought not to attain or enjoyed not the means of acquiring; but some of the best lessons of this accomplished scholar

he appears both to have studied and to have mastered. From him he learned the habit of accurate unwearied research, the happy art of perspicuous statement, and the invaluable secret of pointing all his statements into conclusions of practical utility.

Dr. M'Crie never sought to excel in mathematical pursuits. In his Life of Dr. Robertson, Mr. Stewart remarks, that the taste of the Principal, even in his early years, disposed him more to moral and political speculation, than to the study of the abstract sciences. And the reader of our author's works, and those of Dr. Robertson, can hardly fail to observe, that scarcely ever do either of them borrow expressions or illustrations from subjects of abstract investigation, or physical and mechanical philosophy. Languages, moral and political science, history, philology, eloquence, and in some degree poetry, were Dr. M'Crie's favourite studies in the days of his studentship. Tacitus, Livy, and Cicero, were his most carefully conned classics; and an advice of Mr. Stewart to his students, to keep some Latin author as a *vademecum*, he appears to have followed to the close of his life. It may be mentioned, that the books which furnished the general reading of students at the period of his attendance at the University, and which have exerted no small influence on Scottish literature generally, were the Histories of Hume, Robertson, Watson, and Ferguson; the philosophical works of Locke, Smith, and Reid; Blair's Lectures, and Campbell's Philosophy of Rhetoric, and Kame's Elements of Criticism.

Here, however, where my information must necessarily have been obtained at second-hand, I consider myself fortunate in having prevailed on the Rev. James Gray of Breehin, one of my father's earliest and most intimate friends, to furnish me with the following recollections of this portion of his history, which cannot fail to be interesting to my readers. The high admiration which Mr. Gray entertains for the memory of his friend, must be held to excuse him

for the weight which he attaches to details, too minute, perhaps, to be appreciated by many of my readers, to whom they do not come associated with the charm which early recollections bear in the eyes of those who have descended into the vale of life.

“Never having been in any class at the same time with your father, it is not in my power to state, from observation, to what degree his College exhibitions gave promise of his future eminence. I have heard that he was a great favourite with the highly respectable and pains-taking Greek Professor, and doubt not that he shared in all his meeds of commendation, from *bene* and *bene dixisti*, up to *optime* and *optime quidem dicis*. Of other more substantial and durable tokens of distinction, there were then hardly any in the University of Edinburgh. In the literary and philosophical classes, there was no display of prizes to tempt the young competitor to the comparative trial of talent and diligence; and there is some reason to question, whether any temptation would have lured our student to the contest. Pecuniary reward he always rated very low; and though surely ambitious, and that in no slight degree, of personal excellence, he avoided, wherever it was in his power, the display of superiority at the cost of mortification to a rival. Be the worth what it may of the Roman letters, which a diploma of the *Senatus Academicus* authorizes its bachelors and masters to superadd to name and surname, in Edinburgh the appendages were seldom sought. The degree which young men bestow on one another, in the summary and expressive epithet ‘clever,’ was speedily conferred on your father; and had First Wrangler been an Edinburgh distinction, and to be earned by a display of acuteness and power in a dispute, all his fellows in the debating society would have awarded the honour to him. I can never forget the first sight I obtained of him. It happened to be on a Saturday afternoon, and at a meeting of students in the session-house belonging to Mr. Gib’s congregation. His attire was

homely, his air modest and unpretending, and his manner of speaking full of life and energy. Altogether, the profile was an exact miniature of the figure which was seen in Merchants' Hall more than thirty years after; and the youthful reasonings and replies, gave pledge of almost all the force, and more than the fluency, which marked the pleadings of the later period in behalf of the oppressed.

“The close of his third session introduces your father under a different character. *Ludimagister in schola triviali* was the low taunt by which Salmasius attempted to diminish the author of *Defensio Populi Anglicani* and of *Paradise Lost*. Dr. M'Crie deemed it no degradation to any man to be a teacher of babes; and, as you know, very feelingly refers to the record which represents Buchanan, in his estimate the most original of all Scottish writers, employing some of the latest hours of his life in instructing his young attendant in letters and syllables. In May 1791, our student commenced teacher of a school connected with the congregation of my father, the Rev. John Gray, Antiburgher minister in Brechin. In this situation he continued three years, devoting to the humble vocation the whole year, with the exception of the harvest months, which were occupied by his attendance on the Divinity Hall.

“The school was opened with three very young scholars, but soon became numerous and respectable. It has subsisted now nearly its half century, and has afforded to thousands the means of common education at a very cheap rate. The founder always took a lively interest in its prosperity; and in the last visit he paid to it, which was within a few weeks of his death, seemed to look with parental fondness on the flourishing appearance of the institution.

“In his own exercise of the lowly calling, he showed a fine example of high principle, stooping to the lowest duties of an allotted station with conscientious punctuality and contentment. Always true to the opinion, which he ever held, of the necessity and



advantage of combining religion and education, he mingled, with all the school exercises, the reading of the Scriptures, and the teaching of the Shorter Catechism, as well as some of its sound summaries. In the government of his little community, the restraints of authority, and the indulgences of a kind demeanour, were happily blended, and procured for the teacher the respect and love of all the scholars. The very young looked reveringly up to him as a perfect pattern, and the more advanced honoured him with a judicious esteem, which the survivors still continue to cherish in all their remembrances of him. One of the most respected of them, James Speid, Esquire, banker in Brechin, and lately Provost, has kindly furnished the following recollections of his preceptor:—

“I regret that my reminiscences of the Doctor are so scanty. I was a pupil of his when he taught a private school in Brechin, in 1792–3. I have a perfect recollection of his person at that time, which was handsome; his stature above the ordinary height—his countenance mild and prepossessing—a fine set of teeth—and a peculiar mark on his right eye-brow, which was nearly half white, and the other brown.\* He then kept a school in a large room in Meal Market Wynd, now called Swan Street, and met and dismissed his scholars, morning and evening, with prayer, in a very solemn manner. He had much of the art of keeping order without punishing, and often relaxed into playful cheerfulness with his scholars. I remember accompanying him, on a Saturday afternoon, to visit my worthy uncle, about five miles from Brechin, and he seemed to enjoy the little trip exceedingly, particularly the ruins of Melgund Castle, one of the retreats of Cardinal Beatoun. I then slept

\* The mark here referred to, which struck strangers so forcibly, was occasioned, in his own opinion, by lightning. His attention was first drawn to it by the boys in the school-room, who tittered on observing what they supposed to be a stray patch of hair-powder; and one of them, on being called up, requested him to wipe his eye-brow.

with him, and had occasion to observe the spirit of devotion that imbued his mind,—far surpassing any idea I had previously formed of a great and good man.’

“The time which the schoolmaster gave up to the instruction of others was not lost with respect to his own improvement. He was not, indeed, the plodding book-worm, and his acquaintances did not mark him out as ever likely to become the man of intense application and indefatigable research. Some of his surviving scholars, however, have recorded the observation, that in the school, while every call of professional duty was immediately answered, all the spare moments were given to his own reading and studies. There is reason, too, for believing that with the quiet, unostentatious energy which was a part of his character, he made more use of the midnight lamp than many of his friends suspected. This is certain, that, whether prepared by day or by night, his own tasks were always ready when called for.

“The progress of his mind during this period of his life is to be measured, more by the growth of his powers, than by the accessions which were made to his stock of systematic information. Nor is it at all improbable, that, under his active duties and frequent opportunities of relaxation, his mental faculties, released from the restraints of swaddling bands, acquired a degree of elasticity and vigour which they might not have attained under more retiring habits, and closer engagements of continuous study. He could be busy or idle, with all his might, and possessed “the rare power of doing much, when he appeared to be doing nothing.” He studied man in the living delineations which an intercourse with different grades of society presented; and from the instances in which he had occasion to observe both talent and worth in the lower orders, was taught to cherish sympathy with them, as well as a generous affection for his kind, and a high disdain of that servile flattery which is so commonly offered to rank and riches. It

has been said, that Dean Swift was indebted for no small portion of that powerful writing, which made its way so effectively to the breasts of his countrymen, to his familiar acquaintance with Irish life and manners; and that, in order to attain it, his custom in his journeys was, to prefer the inferior lodging-houses, in which he might have an opportunity of observing genuine samples of the native character. To have seen your father in the midst of a reading club, collected in a back shop, to hear the news and comments of the London Courier, no man would have suspected that he was then making any acquisitions which were to qualify him to write the Life of John Knox; and least of all, did he himself imagine it. In such scenes, however, and in the fellowship of some in the humbler ranks, who retained a portion of the spirit of the olden times, the author who knew how to turn every opportunity to its proper use, acquired his graphic, compressed, business style of writing; discovered both the lights and shadows of Scottish character; was taught to form a just estimate of the spirit and transactions of the Reformation, and was prepared to furnish that representation of them which was so much calculated to interest and inform the Scotsmen of his day.

“It is a well-known fact, that some of our greatest men have been passionately devoted, both to sedentary games, and to the sports of the field. A powerful mind applies its decisive energy even to its amusements, and finds in them a training subservient to the accomplishment of useful undertakings. The game of *draughts* was a favourite diversion with our schoolmaster; even in this it was his ambition to excel, and his unrivalled skill he attained by that determined perseverance which procured for him more valuable acquisitions. It was in one of his latest visits to Brechin that he disclosed, in his own jocular manner, the following portion of his history. He had discovered an old man, a flax-dresser, who was rather eminent as a draughts-player, and to his

shop he repaired duly every lawful evening, quite contented to lose his halfpenny stake. In process of time he learned to beat his instructor, and then the old man, to secure his winnings, would play no more.\* There was another opportunity of healthful amusement, of which your father was very eager to avail himself in its season. In the winter Saturday afternoons he was to be seen in the midst of the Curlers' Club, watching the turns of the game, as if they had involved the fate of empires, and scanning the purposes and movements of the master players, with that attention and sagacity which qualify a man to judge of the plans of statesmen, and the exploits of warriors.

“The means of ascertaining the very date and measure of his early religious impressions would appear to be wanting. The Doctor himself always manifested an instinctive aversion to any thing like display on that subject; and it seems probable that, to use a common expression in its common interpretation, he imbibed with his mother's milk the knowledge and love of religious principle; and that, in a manner insensible to himself, they grew with his growth, and were strengthened with his strength. The sure evidence and substantial effect of genuine piety were exhibited in his consistent exemplary deportment. He was a pattern of punctual attendance on public worship, and yielded a cheerful compliance with all the rules of fellowship in the religious society to which he belonged. The prayer-meeting he regu-

\* Many years after this, my father would be interrupted in his studies by persons who came from a distance, attracted by hearing of his skill in this game, and anxious, after beating all their neighbours, to have a friendly contest with him, which uniformly issued in their defeat. I may add, that though he had an indifferent ear for music, he qualified himself, by a similar course of perseverance, for conducting the musical part of domestic worship. The late Dr. Andrew Thomson, who was inclined to phrenology, having discovered on his head the organ of music largely developed, my father enjoyed a hearty laugh at his friend and the *science*, by informing him how much labour it had cost an old weaver to beat into his head the familiar tune of *St. Paul's*.

larly frequented, and he was always ready to acknowledge that he had reaped much profit from the company and converse of unlettered Christians. A hallowing reverence and love for the whole Sabbath distinguished and adorned all his conduct with respect to it, and it is scarcely credible to what services of lowly condescension he would submit to save dishonour to the sacred day, willing even to do the duty of a menial, that the time which God had blessed and sanctified might be reserved entire for his worship and service.

“Two events of no small importance in the life of the subject of your work, took place during the first year of his residence in Brechin. One was, his joining in the bond for the renewing of the National Covenant of Scotland, and the Solemn League and Covenant of the three nations. This solemn and comprehensive service was performed in the congregation of which he was a member, in the month of August 1791. The part he took in it he never repented, but always regarded as a mean which had its own effect in attaching him to the great and good cause, which it was the aim and the honour of his life to defend and advance.

“The other event to which I alluded was, our teacher’s commencing his Theological studies, and being admitted a member of the Divinity Hall at Whitburn, in September 1791. The class was at that time under the superintendence of the Rev. Archibald Bruce, who was Professor of Theology in the General Synod, from 1786 to 1806, the year of the separation. The progress of your memoir will doubtless present Mr. Bruce in many interesting lights. At the period when your father obtained the eventful introduction to his tuition and acquaintance, every student felt that no instructor was ever more respected and loved than was the learned, able, venerable, and delicately modest recluse of Whitburn; and of all his students, no one more justly appreciated his worth, than did the young man who was

yet unapprized of the peculiar place he was to occupy in his friendship, and of the communion of suffering in which he was at no very distant day to be associated with him.

“In May, 1794, our student bade farewell to Brechin, and to the schoolmaster’s occupation. The *hafflin* boyish air which he brought with him in 1791 had given place to the vigorous, comely port of manhood. His mind showed the full-drawn traits of power and vivacity; his manners were courteous and kind, and the generosity of his conduct was almost culpable in his forgetfulness and indifference with respect to his own interest. In circumstances which afforded no adequate remuneration to his exertions, he was ever to be seen cheerful and buoyant, as are the tenants of the air, who sing among the branches. His innocent playfulness, with conscious rectitude and good will, threw by the cautious reserve which perpetually fears misconstruction. “The clever Schoolmaster” was the appellation by which he was known all over the town; and some fathers in the ministry, and those who yielded to none in admiration of the subsequent productions of his pen, were in the habit of speaking of him under the Scottish abbreviation of the Christian name, which was in due time to be honoured with the doctoral prefix. At this stage of his life no man expected him to write the lives of Knox and Melville, but his acquaintances had already set him down as capable of doing some of their deeds. There are two anecdotes,—the one of Knox, and the other of Melville,—which I take leave to insert from the well-known works, because, had he been placed in the circumstances to which they refer, they would, I verily believe, have been a portion of the history of the subject of your biography. “One fine day a painted image of the Virgin was brought into one of the galleys, and a Scots prisoner was desired to give it the kiss of adoration. He refused, saying, that such idols were accursed, and he would not touch it. “But you shall,” replied one of the

officers, roughly thrusting it in his face, and placing it between his hands. Upon this he took hold of the image, and watching his opportunity, threw it into the river, saying, *Let our Lady save herself: she is lychte enough, let her learne to swyme.*"\* The other anecdote narrates the manner in which Melville procured admission, in a time of civil war, into the city of Orleans. To the question, "Whence are you?" Melville replied, "from Scotland." "O! you Scots are all Hugonots." "Hugonots! what's that? we do not know such people in Scotland." "You have no mass," said the soldier, "Vous vous n'avez pas la Messe." "No mess, man," replied Melville, merrily, "our children in Scotland go to mess every day." "Bon compagnon allez vous," said the soldier, smiling, and beckoning him to proceed.† Let your readers suppose that the historian becomes the hero in these anecdotes, and they will have a more exact idea of your father's character than any description which it is in my power to give. In so far as they show traits of waggery and wit, courage, prudence, and presence of mind, we may write under the picture, Thomas M'Crie, aged 21."

To these recollections, which must bring the subject of our memoirs as he appeared in early life, much more vividly before the eye than any general sketch which might be drawn from them, I have little to add. From all I can learn of him at this period of his life, it appears that while his good taste and studious tendencies preserved him from all extravagance or frivolity, he was full of youthful vivacity, a ready wit, a prompt arguer, foremost in exercises of skill or peril, affable, polite, playful, delighting in innocent relaxation, and quite ready for adventure, competition, or amusement, when a sense of duty, or considerations of propriety interposed no bar in the way of his natural inclinations. The opinions entertained by so young a man upon, questions of importance, would

\* Life of Knox, vol. i., pp. 68, 69.

† Life of Melville, vol. i., p. 55.

be hardly worthy of record, were it not for the light which they throw on the constitutional turn of his mind. In polemical discussions with his fellow-students, he is said to have generally pleaded on what would be called the *liberal* side of the question. If a few more years' reflection induced him to modify his views and correct his judgment on certain points, the change certainly did not arise from any predilection for antiquated opinions, or any want of natural disposition to swim with the current of the day. Like other sanguine and ingenuous spirits, he took a warm interest in the political movements of the French; and, though not a republican, hailed the commencement of the Revolution as auspicious to the general cause of civil and religious liberty. In one of the earliest specimens of his correspondence, written in 1793, and addressed to one of his uncles, a farmer in Berwickshire, who was a staunch supporter of the Tory government then in power, I find him rallying the shrewd old yeoman on the horror he had expressed to him at being reckoned a *Jacobin*, and palliating where he could not excuse the early excesses of the French Revolution. "But why," says he, "have the faults of the French been lashed with so severe a hand? Under the form of government of that country thousands have been crushed under the iron rod of despotism, without drawing a tear from the rest of Europe. Is it because they profess peaceful and fraternal principles? I answer, that the cruelties of the Inquisition, the persecutions, and massacres for the sake of religion, were incomparably more fierce than any exercised by the French; yet they were never represented in such hideous colours. And is cruelty more tolerable, or more excusable, when exercised by those who profess the religion of the meek and lowly Jesus, than when exercised by those who profess to be the friends of liberty? For my part, I have always been averse to join in calumniating a great nation, or in condemning a whole people, struggling under such difficulties, for a few



excesses. A candid observer will find many palliations for these, and while he is grieved at partial evils, he will wonder that greater have not happened. He will consider that when the passions of men are raised to such a pitch as is necessary for effecting a revolution from despotism to liberty, they must naturally vibrate to the opposite extreme, and that some time is required before they can be poised so as to settle upon the medium. Add to this, that their minds are naturally soured by the remembrance of injuries which they received from their former masters. In this particular, tyranny carries along with it its own punishment; for in proportion to the ignorance in which a people are kept under despotism, will their fury and licentiousness be when they are freed from the yoke, and they will retort that barbarity upon the heads of their tyrants, which they formerly suffered from their hands." In this extract from a letter written, as he hints, merely to divert himself at the expense of his uncle's aristocratic partialities, those who are familiar with the literary works of the writer, will probably desery the spirit which was to vindicate the better-principled reformers of his own country, in such indignant remonstrances as the following: "What! do we celebrate with public rejoicings victories over the enemies of our country in the gaining of which thousands of our fellow-creatures have been sacrificed? And shall solemn masses and sad dirges, accompanied with direful execrations, be everlastingly sung for the mangled members of statues, torn pictures, and ruined towers?"\*

In prosecuting our biography, we have now to mention that, on leaving Brechin, he resided during the summer of 1794 in the family of his maternal uncle, Mr. William Hood of Woodhall, near Dunbar; and in the following winter he attended the University and finished the curriculum appointed

\* Life of Knox, vol. i., p. 276.

for students of theology by attending the Natural Philosophy class. It was not uncommon at that time, though far from being a good arrangement, for Secession students to defer this last step in their philosophical course till near the close of their attendance at the divinity hall. In his case this last year at college was improved to the best advantage, and every acquisition suitable to the vocation which he contemplated was diligently sought. He disdained not the aid of an elocution class, and the popularity which attended his early exhibitions in the pulpit may perhaps be ascribed in some degree to the lessons which he received in the "artful art." A more substantial qualification for the work of the ministry, he continued to cultivate in the homely fellowship of the prayer-meeting. Already the weight of his character began to be felt; within the circumscribed sphere in which alone he was yet known, expectations of his future eminence were formed, and earnestness were not wanting of the high respect with which he was one day to be honoured.

On the 9th September 1795, he was licensed to be a preacher of the Gospel by the Associate Presbytery of Kelso. On this occasion he took a step which he soon afterwards saw reason to regret. The period of his license having occurred, while certain changes were in contemplation by the Synod affecting the profession of the body, he considered himself warranted to object against taking the formula without some qualification. Before the usual questions, therefore, were proposed to him, he asked and obtained the following marking, in the minutes of the Presbytery:—"That by his answers to these questions he is not to be understood as giving any judgment upon the question respecting the power of the civil magistrate in religious matters, in so far as the same is in dependence before the General Associate Synod."\* With respect to this qualified assent,—a point which has been often misrepresented, and which

\* Minutes of the Associate Presbytery of Kelso, Sept. 9th, 1795.

is even yet ill understood by many,—it is only necessary to say at present, that we shall have an occasion to recur to it in another portion of our memoir, when a connected view of the case will be given, and the facts which bear upon it will be fairly and fully brought out.

The character and public appearances of the young preacher attracted immediate notice, and in little more than a month after his license, a unanimous call invited him to become a minister of the second Associate congregation assembling in Potterrow, Edinburgh.\* A trivial occurrence which took place at this time, deserves to be recorded as an instance of that delicacy of feeling by which he was always distinguished. Another respectable congregation had resolved to give him a call, and one of its members took an opportunity of communicating to him their purpose; but, assured that for them there was no prospect of success, he at once told them so, and thus prevented a competition before the Synod. Though not dead to the feelings of ambition, he scorned to purchase the triumph of a little additional éclat, at the expense of a cruel disappointment to a people who were prepared to honour him with the highest token of their attachment and esteem. I may perhaps be chargeable with making a useless and too liberal disclosure of his private sentiments, when I record a confession which he made to an intimate friend, that, long before there was any prospect of such an event, he had a strong presentiment that he would be settled as a minister in Edinburgh.

In addition to what was formerly stated, we have

\* This congregation was formed by a division of that of Mr. Gib, and the circumstances which led to their disjunction are alluded to by Dr. Mc'Crie, in his Evidence on Patronage 1834:—"I was once in connexion with a larger Synod, consisting of from a hundred to a hundred and fifty congregations, and I know of only one instance in which, in consequence of their being thwarted in repeated applications for a minister settled in another place, a part of a congregation applied for and obtained a disjunction, by which they were erected into a separate congregation in the same religious communion, and I ultimately became their pastor."

now to add, that he refused to submit to ordination unless the reservation with which he took his vows should be declared as publicly as the vows themselves. It was no uncommon thing to grant a marking in the minutes of Presbyteries, but the public expression of reserve was new, and the Presbytery of Edinburgh not conceiving themselves authorized to introduce the practice, referred the matter to the Synod which met in May 1796. Another preacher being in the same circumstances, and preferring the same request, both ordinations were delayed in expectation of the deliverance which was craved from the Supreme Court. The Synod not only granted what was sought in the particular cases, but passed a general declaration, which shall be given in its place when the subject is resumed, in order to explain the part, first and last, which Dr. M'Crie took in the affair.

On the 26th of May 1796, he was set apart to the office of the holy ministry in the congregation of Potterrow. The Rev. Robert Chalmers, Haddington, with whom he was afterwards to be intimately associated in labours and in suffering, preached and presided on that occasion.\* And on the following Sabbath, the young minister began his public labours by preaching from 2 Cor. vi. 1: "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."

The settlement of the subject of these memoirs in the conspicuous station which he occupied through life, was, it is now manifest, subservient to important purposes. In this arrangement, the hand of a high overruling Providence is doubtless to be chiefly acknowledged; at the same time, the working of the practice of popular choice in the determining the particular scene of a minister's stated duty, is not to

\* The Discourse delivered on this occasion, with the ordination Addresses, appeared in a rare and highly prized volume of Sermons published by Mr. Chalmers in 1798. The text is 1 Tim. iii. 1: "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work."

be overlooked. It was the free unfettered right of election which provided for the congregation a pastor at once adapted to themselves, and fitted to do the work and meet the trials of his particular station, and which set him down in the midst of advantages and opportunities which were so largely improved for the good of the church universal. Humanly speaking, the world and the church are indebted, for all that Dr. M'Crie has accomplished as an ecclesiastical historian, to the much-decried principle of popular election. But for his settlement in Edinburgh, his volumes, in all likelihood, had never existed. Nor is there any reason to fear that, were this Scriptural principle adopted in the establishment, as its original constitution demands, it would prove less effectual in securing for eminent posts the services of qualified men, than the opposite system which, indeed, has only succeeded in this object in so far as patrons have been compelled by circumstances to accommodate it to the spontaneous and united voice of the Christian people.

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## CHAPTER II.

FROM HIS SETTLEMENT IN EDINBURGH TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF HIS CONTROVERSY WITH THE SYNOD. 1796—1804.

SHORTLY after his settlement in Edinburgh, Dr. M'Crie was united in marriage with Janet, daughter of Mr. William Dickson, a respectable farmer in the parish of Swinton. This union, which was the result of a long and ardent attachment, contributed greatly to his domestic happiness. Mrs. M'Crie was a person of singular sweetness of disposition, beloved by all who knew her, and she discharged the duties of a

wife and mother with the most exemplary prudence, affection and faithfulness.

The events of Dr. M'Crie's life as a minister of the Gospel at this period would not have been here recorded, were it not from a conviction that, in connexion with the place which he was destined to fill as a public man, they are neither unimportant nor uninteresting. While they justified the expectation which his friends who knew him in early life were led to form, they present to us the earnestness of what he was afterwards to accomplish, and illustrate the manner in which he was trained for his work.

His pulpit exercises at this period were always able, prepared with conscientious care, and, in the early part of his ministry, delivered in a style not only animated but oratorical; and this, aided by a somewhat fashionable air and attire, conveyed, at first sight, to some of his more aged brethren, rather an unfavourable impression of his character, which soon however wore off on longer acquaintance. There may have been also some ground for the remark, that his discourses, though masterly expositions of some of the leading doctrines of Christianity, were too abstract and intellectual for ordinary hearers. A distant mission in which he was employed, had a considerable influence in changing his views and tastes on the subject of preaching. In August 1798, he was sent, with his friend Mr. James Gray, to the Orkney Islands, where he presided at the ordination of Mr. William Broadfoot at Kirkwall. These islands, owing to various causes, had been left deplorably destitute of religious instruction, few of the inhabitants being able to read, and the great mass living in ignorance of the doctrines of salvation. A revival, however, originating in a prayer-meeting held by a few individuals in a remote corner of one of the islands, had led to an application for supply of sermon from the General Associate Synod. At the period of Dr. M'Crie's visit, the excitement was very strong, being exhibited in the arrested attention

and visible impression produced in the crowds which assembled, Sabbath-day and week-day, to hear the Gospel, and in the eagerness with which they sought the instructions and counsels of the ministers in private.\*

On the ardent mind of Dr. M'Cric, the scenes which he had witnessed in Orkney left a very strong impression; and on his return in September, he delivered a discourse to his own flock, on "the return of the seventy," in which he gave them an account of the mission, and contrasted the eagerness with which the Gospel was listened to, and the striking effects which it produced, in these long-neglected islands, with the apathy and carelessness too often manifested towards it in more favoured parts of the land. "In the country from which I have lately come," he said, "thank God, it is otherwise. *There*, you will see persons hearing as those who have souls which must be saved or lost. *There*, you may see the most lively concern depicted on every face, and hear the important question put from one to another, "What must I do to be saved?" *Here*, it is a miracle to see one in tears when hearing the Gospel, and if at any time we witness the solitary instance, we are tempted to think the person weak or hypocritical. *There*, it is no uncommon thing to see hundreds in tears, not from the relation of a pathetic story, nor by an address to the passions, but by the simple declaration of a few plain facts respecting sin and salvation. *Here*, it is with difficulty that we can fix your attention on the sublimest truths during a short discourse; we must contrive to amuse you with some striking form of address, we must keep you awake

\* The permanent effects of the Secession Mission to Orkney, in the numerous congregations which have sprung up, and in its collateral influence on the Established ministers, all candid persons, acquainted with the facts, must acknowledge to have been beneficial. In respect of enjoying the Gospel and its privileges, and compared to what they were at the close of the last century, the eight-and-twenty islands may be said to have been evangelized.

by mingling amusement with instruction. *There*, in order to be heard with the most eager attention, one has only to open his mouth and speak of Christ; and after he is done, they will follow him to his house, and beseech him to tell them more about Christ. *Here*, it is only certain preachers that can be patiently heard; *there*, so far as we know, there has not been one from whom they have not received the word gladly, nor one sermon preached which has not brought tears from the eyes of some." The impression left on the preacher's own mind produced a change on his sermons which many of his hearers did not fail to remark. And such, I am assured, was his growing acceptability that, before his name was known as an historian, he was every where received as one of the most respectable preachers of his day.

Into the more private duties of the ministry, he carried that spirit of faithfulness and diligence, which might be presumed, from the unction with which he has recorded the feelings and reflections of the Scottish Reformer on this subject. In a letter to a brother, dated 22d March 1803, accompanying a copy of Baxter's Reformed Pastor, he writes, "You do not say whether it is the abridgment or the original copy you wish. The abridgment is indeed purged of much matter which is deemed extraneous, and wrought up to a finer style. But for my own part, (and I think I may answer for yours also,) I prefer the original with all its digressions and allusions to then recent facts, and the natural rough-spun eloquence of the author, to all the modish dress which an abridger can give it. The whole book is written with great fervour and piety, and there are some places where you are carried along with an irresistible torrent. It had an effect upon me, when I read it some time ago, somewhat similar to what you say the reading of Doddridge's Life had upon you. I began to inquire what additional labours I was called to use. The consequence has been a little



more attention and diligence in ordinary labours, rather than the attempting of any thing new. But how soon are we apt to become weary, and how prone to invent or admit excuses! Baxter satisfactorily answers the objections made in his day to diligence in the duties of the ministerial office. But there is one which I may call the Seceding objection: "We do all these things already. We catechise our congregation, and we perform a course of family visitation every year. What lack *we*?" Will you be so good as suggest some few thoughts upon this objection?"

At this period, indeed, his time seems to have been divided between the labours of the desk, and the duties of his pastoral charge. Not that he was, by any means, a recluse; on the contrary, none perhaps more fairly practised the maxim of the old Roman, *Dulce est desipere in loco*. He had no mental hobby, no amateur engagements which either engrossed his mind or dissipated his attention. His relaxations were such as produced an alterative effect on his spirits, and gave him back to his serious employments with renovated vigour.—But I again avail myself of the recollections of the friend of his youth, to whose contributions I have been already indebted.

"The native frankness and kindness of his temper gave a constant charm to his conversation, which can never be forgotten by those who had the pleasure of enjoying it. Could we present the traits of this temper as portrayed in the substantial acts of doing good, and sympathizing with his friends in their joys and their sorrows, we should show the secret of that attachment which all his acquaintance bore to him. The politeness which preferred others to himself, the readiness with which he gave his counsel and co-operation, and the liberal hospitality of his fire-side, acquired for him that popularity which expresses the homage of the heart. At the time of the Synod, others made up their dinner parties from a desire to flatter talents, to honour a friend, to acknowledge a

good deed, or to form a train for accomplishing some particular purpose. Dr. M'Crie seemed to wait, unostentatiously, to show his kindness to the persons whom others overlooked."

Disinterestedness was, without doubt, from first to last, a prominent feature in the subject of our memoirs, and entered more deeply into the formation of his high public spirit, than a mercenary mind would be willing to admit. In the early years of his ministry, he gave a rare example of that peculiar delicacy of feeling which he never failed to show in all matters of personal interest and emolument; nor is it unworthy of being recorded, as a precedent deserving of attention from those who sometimes forget, that the willingness of a poor but attached congregation to make sacrifices for the sake of their minister, affords no rule for his expectations or demands. His congregation had rapidly increased, but being composed chiefly of the humbler classes of society, his income had not been raised to a sum adequate to support his station in a large city, and meet the wants of an increasing family. In 1798, when the price of provisions was uncommonly high, his people proposed to make some addition to his stipend. The report of this coming to his ears, he addressed to them the following characteristic letter:—

“To the Elders and other Members of the Associate  
Congregation, Potterrow.

“DEAR BRETHREN,—As I understand you are to have before you a proposal for augmenting my stipend, I have thought it proper to write you a few lines on the subject.

“The allowance which you promised me when I first came among you as your minister, and which has been always punctually paid, though not so liberal as what may be given to others of the same station in this place, has hitherto been sufficient. From any general knowledge I have of the state of your funds, it

is as much as you can be supposed to give, especially considering the burdens under which you labour. The expense of living has indeed been increasing for some time past, but the incomes of trades-people have not increased in proportion; and as the most of you are of that description, I don't consider myself entitled to make any increasing demand upon you.

My desire is, therefore, that you delay making any additional allowance for me at this time. I am persuaded that, when Providence places it in your power, you will not be backward to make my circumstances easy; and having this confidence, I have more satisfaction than any sum you can add could give me. I would wish to rejoice in my stipend as one of the fruits of my preaching among you, but the consideration of this being a burden to you would deprive me of this joy, and even hurt me in the exercise of my ministry. Go on, my brethren, in your regular attendance on the ordinances of Christ; abound yet more and more in the fruits of righteousness; let me have joy in beholding your good order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ;—and every other thing shall, in due time, be added to me.

“I have only to add, that I send this letter, not from a circumstance of delicacy, but from a sense of duty, and that, as I am necessarily absent from home at the time of your meeting, you will at least delay this matter till another opportunity. In doing so, you will oblige your affectionate pastor,

“THO. M'CRIE.”

It may be easily imagined that this letter, which was gratefully inserted in the minute-book of the congregation, did not render them less anxious to exert themselves for the comfort of their pastor. In 1800, a year of great scarcity, he formally proposed to give up a portion of his promised stipend; an offer which we need not say, was not accepted. It is but justice to add, that the disinterested minister found, to the end of his life, a generous congregation; and

that, though not without his difficulties, of which, for the sake of the cause in which he was embarked, he never once complained, he was all along creditably and honourably provided for.

From the first year of his settlement in Edinburgh, his mind was constantly engaged on subjects of general interest and public importance, and it became apparent that his lucubrations would sooner or later be embodied in some work of permanent utility. His first acknowledged publication was a Sermon, which he was anxious to have forgotten, and it is with a visiting of reluctance that we do any thing to save it from the oblivion to which he would have devoted it. It is entitled, "The Duty of Christian Societies towards each other, in relation to the measures for propagating the Gospel, which at present engage the attention of the religious world, a Sermon preached in the meeting-house, Potterrow, on occasion of a collection for promoting a mission to Kentucky, 1797."\* The

\*The text is Luke ix., 49, 50. "And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not, for he that is not against us is for us." On comparing the Sermon with the manuscript of his lecture on the same subject, delivered in January 1833, I have observed the following differences in his interpretation of the words. In the Sermon, he supposes that the person who was found casting out devils was a disciple of John the Baptist—that the twelve apostles and seventy disciples formed a church from which it appears "there were conscientious dissenters,"—that "the cause of God was managed by other parties, yea, even by a single straggling individual, and that this individual received no discouragement from Christ." In the Lecture, he pronounces these positions untenable, and maintains that the person referred to was a disciple, not of John, but of Jesus, though he "followed not" with the apostles—that "what misleads us in this interpretation is, that we are accustomed to use the phrase a *follower* of Christ as synonymous with a believer in Christ, whereas in the gospels it is more frequently used for *personal attendance* on Jesus; and that many who believed on Christ, were not required to follow him in the manner referred to by John, by leaving their homes and occupations." He adds, "to one of these, at least, he had secretly imparted a miraculous power, without either requiring or wishing him to become one of his constant attendants; on the contrary, it was his will that this individual should act apart, and that his separate testimony should confirm the collective testimony of the apostles."

preface informs us that "a request from the congregation to which the following Sermon was preached, produced the author's first idea of offering to the public a composition intended solely for the occasion mentioned in the title-page." It would be difficult for the ordinary reader to discover in the discourse any thing of which the author had reason to feel ashamed; it is well written, and contains some strong passages in condemnation of the loose views which prevailed at the time on lay-preaching and church-communion. The object, indeed, of the Sermon, is fully as much to guard against the extreme of latitudinarian pliability of principle, as the other extreme of "a narrow-minded intolerant zeal." But it was not long before the author became satisfied that he had not only misapprehended his text, but in the ardour of youthful zeal had ventured on statements liable to dangerous construction, and lending some countenance to that very latitudinarianism which he meant to avoid. So seriously was this impressed on his mind, so tenderly did he feel on every thing affecting the honour of truth, that he could not rest till he had made a public retraction of the sentiments to which we have referred, in a sermon which he preached at the opening of the Synod in 1801. He never afterwards relished any allusion to this production. Not many years ago, a copy of it, designed for a gentleman who wished to possess it as Dr. M'Crie's first publication, having fallen into his own hands, he actually destroyed it, and could never be brought to give any other account of its fate than what might be gathered from the peculiar smile with which he met any inquiry on the subject. This first and in his eye unfortunate appearance before the public taught him a lesson, which he steadily practised through life, and strongly inculcated on all would-be authors, never to publish a discourse simply "at the request of the congregation." Having been solicited in 1803, by another congregation to publish a Sermon which he had preached to them, he thus

writes to the minister who had conveyed the request: —“Since my miscarriage as to the printed sermon, any desire which I might have felt to appear in public, has been suppressed, and I cannot say I am disposed to revive it. That the sermon referred to gave you and the good people under your charge any measure of satisfaction, affords me more real gratification than ever I derived from any praise bestowed upon the former, which, considering the quarter it came from, was the first thing that excited the suspicion in my mind which led to my own great dissatisfaction with it. Besides what you mention, I am aware that the opinion which is formed of a spoken discourse depends much upon the feelings both of speaker and hearers at the time, feelings which cannot be easily communicated to the public, nor called up by themselves at a future period. Be so good as excuse me to the people in the manner you think best.”\*

We should not have dwelt so long upon this sermon, were it not to correct a misapprehension partly founded upon it, that his sentiments in early life, on the points to which it referred, differed considerably from those which he afterwards adopted. Even granting that he did not perceive so clearly, at that period, the danger of loose views as to ecclesiastical fellowship, the mistake of having lent any countenance to these was so speedily discovered, and so publicly disclaimed, that it cannot reasonably or honourably be quoted to his prejudice. But, in fact, there is evidence to show that, even before the publication of the sermon, his views on the subject of strict profession and pure fellowship, leaned in an opposite direction, and were exactly such as might have been expected from one who was through life

\* It is curious to observe the same caution operating on his mind in 1829, when he thus writes to one of his brethren, on being solicited by the Synod to publish his Sermon preached before them: “It has always been impressed upon my mind that an audience, whether learned or otherwise, are not generally the best judges as to the propriety of publishing to the world a discourse delivered before them.”

the enlightened and consistent advocate of reformation principles. Before the first sacrament of his ministry, when he had to reckon the number of his accessions by scores, the sentiment which he is distinctly remembered to have uttered was, "In comparison of having the truth, I will not think of the numbers who may aid me in maintaining it." His first paper in "The Christian Magazine," which appeared in the first number of that periodical, February 1797, and which may be considered his first published piece, had for its subject the value of principle. It is "On the Importance of right Principles in Religion, and the Danger of those which are false." The following extract will show its purport.

"Truth, eternal truth, is the firm and immovable basis of the Church. She is built upon that system of doctrine which is laid down in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. Upon this rock the Church is founded; and hell and earth, though their united efforts have, since her erection, been directed against her, have not been able to detach a single stone from her superstructure. Of late the method of attack seems to have been materially changed. Despairing of success from open assault, the enemies of Christianity have endeavoured to undermine it, by recommending an indifference to all truth. This doctrine has been eagerly embraced, and warmly recommended. Religion is represented as a matter of feeling, and morality as an instinctive and natural principle. The friends of revealed truth are ridiculed as sticklers for *opinion*, and as persons who, overlooking the substance, contend about the form. Many now ask, with Pilate, ironically, What is truth? and wait not for a reply, reckoning it a mere illusion, a phantom, which is here, there, and no where. "If a man," say they, "have a sound heart and a good practice, it matters not of what creed he be." On this fashionable modern opinion,

(for it too is an *opinion*.) I beg leave to suggest the following observations." The substance of these observations is, "that the opinion of those who plead for indifference about truth and religious principles, is founded upon a mistaken view of the nature and duty of man, of the importance and influence of these upon the heart and life, and especially upon ignorance and misapprehension of the doctrines of revelation, and their connexion with the interests of morality and mankind."

In the same periodical, for November and December 1798, there are two "Letters on Bigotry," written by him, and signed *Phlegon*, breathing the same spirit. In these articles, while he condemns bigotry justly so called, his main design is to point out the abuse which has been made of the term when applied to those who zealously contend for the truth, and act on the principle of strict communion. Bigotry he defines to be blind zeal; a bigot is one who is "irrationally zealous." "But is all zeal for divine truth blind or irrational? Is it not good to be zealously affected always in a good thing?" The advocates of lax communion make much use of the distinction between what they call *essentials* and *circumstantials*. "This hackneyed distinction," says he, "under the semblance of liberality of sentiment, hath done more injury among serious Christians than any one I am acquainted with. It proceeds from, and it tends greatly to increase, a selfish spirit in the matters of God. What is its true import? It is simply this: "You must be careful to believe, and zealously adhere to as much of divine truth as is necessary to secure heaven for yourselves; but as to other things, it is of little moment whether you believe them or not." But is not the glory of God our highest end? Are we not bound to seek our own happiness in subserviency to this?"

At a period very near the time of the publication of the sermon, he published, in concert with his friend, Mr. Whytock of Dalkeith, a first and second



“Dialogue between John, a Baptist, and Ebenezer, a Seceder.” The subject was Faith, and the pamphlets were designed to obviate what he conceived to be some mistaken statements on the point, made in a work of Mr. John M'Lean, Baptist minister in Edinburgh. They display no small portion of that versatility of talent which could adapt itself to the difficult style of dialogue, and gave promise of what he might have accomplished as a writer on polemical theology.

But the event of his life which more than any other gave a direction to all his literary labours, was the public controversy in the religious body with which he was first associated in profession. In many of its accompaniments, it was in a high degree painful; at the same time, both from the influence which it communicated to his own mind, and the public appearances which it called him to make, is to be regarded as the turning dispensation of his lot.

This portion of his history renders it necessary to enter a little into the general subject, a necessity which we the less regret when we consider the interesting and extensive bearings of the leading question which it involves. At the time, indeed, when Dr. M'Crie and his brethren had to fight their battle, the majority of Seceders soothed their minds with the persuasion that the matter was of small importance; and with hardly a single exception, the members of the Established Church looked on with indifferent security. Recent events, however, have undeceived both; on every hand now, the duty of the State with respect to religion, is become the engrossing and reigning question of the day; and it will be found that, without direct reference to the subordinate question of pecuniary support, the grand principle of the Reformation on this subject, in its higher and more comprehensive aspect, formed the sum and substance of all the contendings in which Dr. M'Crie and those with whom he acted, were at this period involved.

In entering on these details, the writer can

truly declare, that it gives him no pleasure to rake up the ashes of this unhappy controversy. The leading facts only will be given, and these with as much brevity as is compatible with the honour of truth, and the elucidation of the line of conduct pursued by the subject of these memoirs.

The Secession from the Church of Scotland, which took place in 1733, differed from almost every other instance of ecclesiastical separation on record. Instead of proceeding, as these have generally done, from dissatisfaction with the doctrine, worship, or constitution of the Established Church, the cause of the Secession was precisely the reverse. The first Seceders were so heartily attached to the standards and constitutional principles of the mother-church, that they left her communion expressly on the ground that she had, in their judgment, deserted them. It would prevent much confusion of ideas on this point, to distinguish between the *occasion* and the *object* of the Secession—two things which, in fact, differed very considerably. The immediate *occasion* of the separation was doubtless the tyranny and mal-administration of a prevailing party in the judicatories of the Church, who sheltered erroneous teachers from censure,—enforced, with unnecessary rigour, the obnoxious law of patronage, by intruding presentees on reclaiming congregations,—and restrained the due exercise of ministerial liberty in testifying against these abuses in the pulpit. Four ministers, who took an active part in protesting against these abuses, were censured and loosed from their charges by the Commission; and finding themselves thus thrust out from the Church, they formally declared SECESSION from the prevailing party in her judicatories. But neither the pressure of patronage, nor the toleration of erroneous doctrine, nor the restraint of ministerial freedom, of which they complained, as injurious both to truth and to godliness, would have induced the Seceders to take this step, had not the judicatories of the Establishment been regarded by them as “carry-

ing on a course of defection from our reformed and covenanted principles,"—against which they had, for a series of years, been testifying within the pale of the Establishment.\* This they plainly declared, from the very first, to be the ground on which they "stated their secession." So that, while the occasion of their being driven into the position of Seceders, was the conduct of the judicatories on the points already referred to, the real *object* of the Secession, as a formed and separate profession, was to assert and defend the principles of the Reformation. The original Seceders identified themselves with the Church of Scotland, as she existed in her purer days, particularly during the period of the Second Reformation, between 1638 and 1650. On this era, distinguished as that of the Solemn League and Covenant, they took up their ground and planted the banner of their testimony. They not only espoused the principles of the Covenanters during that period, and of the great body of them during the bloody persecution which followed, but were themselves Covenanters, being the only religious body in the country who renewed the National Covenants, in a bond suited to their circumstances, and thus practically recognised their obligation as national deeds on posterity. In short, "they appeared as a part of the Church of Scotland, adhering to her reformed constitution, testifying against the injuries which it had received, seeking the redress of these, and pleading for the revival of a reformation attained according to the Word of God in a former period, approved by every authority in the land, and ratified by solemn vows to the Most High."†

\* "It is plain," says Mr. Wilson in his Defence of the Secession, "that it was not violent intrusions, it was not the act 1732, neither was it any other particular step of defection, considered abstractly and by themselves, upon which the Secession was stated; but a complex course of defection, both in doctrine, government, and discipline, carried on with a high hand by the present judicatories of this Church, justifying themselves in their procedure, and refusing to be reclaimed."—P. 40.

† Appendix to Sermons on Unity, by Dr. M'Crie. Edinburgh, Blackwood, 1821.

From this account it will be seen that the characteristic feature of the profession made by Seceders,—that, indeed, which distinguished it from the profession of the Relief, and similar bodies, separating from the mother-church—was its nationality. To say that they were friendly to the principle of national religion, is to say nothing; this was in fact the discriminating principle of their association. The whole scheme of reformation for which they contended, was, in its form, national. The moment this principle was abandoned, the main design of the Secession, as an ecclesiastical movement, was lost sight of; when the opposite principle was embraced, that design was reversed.

In 1747, the Secession was unhappily divided, by a controversy about burgess oaths, into two parties, generally known by the name of Burgher and Anti-burgher; both parties, however, still professing to adhere to the Judicial Act and Testimony. But, about the close of the last century, symptoms began to appear on both sides, of a disposition to qualify their adherence to the standards of the Church of Scotland on the points of the magistrate's power *circa sacra*, and national covenanting. In the Anti-burgher Synod, to which Dr. M'Crie belonged, a variety of circumstances combined to produce this change. The estrangement from the Church of their fathers, naturally engendered, in too many cases, by long-continued separation, was followed by alienation from the principles of her constitution. A laudable attachment to the invaluable doctrines which involve the spirituality of the Church, and the supremacy of the Church's only Head and Lord, wrought in some minds unfounded jealousies with respect to the lawful exercise of civil authority in its own proper sphere. Nor can it be denied, that the events and opinions which accompanied the political agitations of the close of the last century, and the beginning of the present, had their own effect on the minds of Seceders. It became quite a common occurrence to

modify an assent to the Formula by a vague exception, which, by its very vagueness, neutralized the whole profession in its bearings on the question of civil establishments. The consequence was, that, on this subject, the Antiburghers were prepared for a change; some were consciously and avowedly alienated from the received principles of the body; while the greater part, though rather disposed to adhere to their profession, did not consider the points in dispute of sufficient importance to warrant them in resisting the introduction of some general neutralizing expedient, especially as this appeared to be no more than what was accorded in every instance when individuals requested it.

This state of the profession on the subject of the magistrate's power, could not fail to be felt as irksome, and various measures were proposed for redress. It was an overture for extending the Testimony, that drew on the issue in which the subject of our memoirs was interested. This portion of the history of the Antiburgher branch of the Secession, will be found to record a warning to all churches, to guard against meddling rashly with their public formularies. Little did the movers of this proposal foresee its consequences, either as affecting the public cause, or their own personal history. It was in the house of one who found himself afterwards in the heart of the conflict, that the design was talked over a short time before its accomplishment; and all the four brethren, who subsequently formed the opposition, appeared to hail its completion, till its progress revealed its real character and effects.

The proposal came before the Synod as an overture from the Presbytery of Forfar. Its professed and defined object was an enlargement of the Testimony, so as to bring it down to present times, and apply it to events which had occurred since its enactment in 1736. In this form the prayer of the overture was granted, and a Committee appointed to prepare a draught of the additions which it might be

proper to make. The Committee had scarcely commenced their operations, when they resolved to exceed their powers, and, instead of preparing an appendix to the Testimony, to compose a new work, which was designated "The Narrative and Testimony." At an extraordinary meeting of Synod in 1793, the draught as prepared by the Committee was produced, and not only was indemnity granted for going beyond their commission, but the fruit of their joint labours, in the form of an overture, was highly applauded, and met with a reception, which, as might have been foreseen, ensured its eventual adoption.

The precise character of this document it is hardly necessary to investigate, its authority being now as little acknowledged by those who so keenly supported and at every hazard enacted it, as by those who found themselves from the beginning compelled to reject it. The changes which it introduced were numerous, but all connected with the leading point of civil management respecting religion. As yet the lawfulness of establishments was not directly denied; indeed, a protecting note was inserted, as a sort of caveat against pledging themselves that they were absolutely unlawful. Even this, however, amounted to the withdrawal of every former declaration, expressed or implied, in their favour; and the New Testimony was the obliteration of every previous appearance made by Seceders in behalf of any civil arrangements which had for their object the security or promotion of religion. So much did this spirit pervade the formulary, that it not only directed the statement of principle, but moulded and modified the narrative of facts, which accompanied it. The obligation of the Covenants, so far as they were national and civil in their object, was not only unacknowledged, but by necessary consequence denied and impugned. With all this there was mixed up much that was sound and incontrovertible truth, and much that, however incompatible with other parts of the

deed, could be conveniently quoted to silence, if not to satisfy, a simple-minded objector. In short, the dilemma of renouncing received principles, and at the same time saving the appearance and repelling the imputation of doing so,—doing the deed, and yet denying it,—produced of necessity a medley of inconsistencies which, but for the serious importance of the case, would have been amusing, and to a Pascal would have afforded rich materials for a new series of Provincial Letters.

It is now placed beyond all reasonable disputing, that the New Testimony adopted by the General Synod in 1804, differed *toto cælo* from the original Testimony, in every point peculiar to the profession of Seceders. The difference did not lie in a few unessential points, but in the very spirit and specific nature and design of the two documents. The Secession Testimony was neither more nor less than an appearance in behalf of the principles of the Church of Scotland, as exhibited in the Westminster standards, and of the whole work of reformation, civil as well as ecclesiastical, with an adherence to the solemn obligations by which the Church and State, in their respective spheres, are bound to maintain them. This character is emblazoned on its front—it is verified by all its contents—and the time will soon come, when it shall hardly be credited that an opposite sentiment was ever entertained. The original deed was entitled, “Act, declaration, and testimony for the doctrine, worship, discipline and government of the Church of Scotland; agreeably to the Word of God, the Confession of Faith, the National Covenant of Scotland, and the Solemn League and Covenant of the three nations; and against several steps of defection from the same both in former and present times.” One needs only to read this title to discover, that it was not a declaration of adherence to certain truths *simply* on the general ground of their being agreeable to Scripture; but a testimony for the profession of the Church of

Scotland, and the *national* reformation. A large portion of the Old Testimony, therefore, was occupied by an explicit acknowledgment of the *civil* as well as ecclesiastical steps affecting the progress of the Reformation, and the national bonds by which it was ratified. In the New Testimony, again, under the pretext of "resting the whole of their ecclesiastical constitution on the testimony of God in his Word, the primary affinity of the Secession to the Church of Scotland is wholly evaded; and the standards of that Church, formerly testified for, are only recognised, like any other book, so far as they agree with the standards erected by the General Synod. On the duty of magistrates to support and promote true religion, so distinctly approved in the original Testimony, the Synod maintained that "the power competent to worldly kingdoms is wholly temporal, respecting *only* the *secular* interests of society,"—that the magistrate could only promote religion "in his private character," and "by his own advice and example." And with regard to all that our ancestors did in securing the reformation of civil enactments, they declare, "we do *not vindicate* their embodying the matter of their religious profession with the laws of the country, and giving it the formal sanction of civil authority." These principles might, or they might not, "rest on the testimony of God in his word;" but to deny that their adoption by the Synod inferred a radical change in "their ecclesiastical constitution," and to cover their retreat from the ancient ground, by talking lightly of the standards which they forsook, and loudly of the Scriptures to which they professed adherence,—would be an attempt to disguise the truth of history, which must inevitably, in the end, recoil upon the heads of those who venture on it, and rouse the contempt, if not the indignation, of all honourable minds.

It may be supposed that, in the early stage of this controversy, many excellent men who favoured the contemplated innovations were actuated solely by



dread of every thing which savoured of persecution for conscience' sake; and there is reason to think that very few, if any, in the Synod, were aware of the practical results to which their principles would lead.\* The worst feature in the whole case, and which few will now venture to palliate, was the attempt put forth from the beginning, and studiously kept up to the end, to persuade the people connected with the Secession that no change was made on their profession by the new deeds—that they were still contending for all the principles maintained by the first Seceders! It is possible, that during the heat of the contest, many may have flattered themselves that the views which they had espoused as individuals, had always been those entertained by their fathers. But the consequence of this policy was, that the great body of the people, many of whom were still friendly to the original principles of the Secession as stated in their Testimony, were kept in total ignorance of the change, while many more who would have been startled at the idea of moving off “the good old way in which their fathers walked,” yielded a quiet acquiescence, when assured by those whom they were accustomed to revere, that the Synod had done no more than vindicated themselves from the imputation of holding persecuting principles. Recent events have placed the true character of this change beyond all question; and the great body of modern Seceders, moving, as might be expected, from one step of defection to another, are now ready to avow, and glory in the avowal, that in following out the principles then adopted to their le-

\* It is worth observing, that in an account of the General Associate Synod, written in 1809, three years after Dr. M'Crie had left them, and transmitted by one of their own number, (the late Dr. Jamieson, I believe,) to Mr. Adams for insertion in his work then published, it is said, “There is no reason to believe, that, if the corruptions complained of, in the Church of Scotland, were removed, the mere legal establishment would be viewed, by *any of the members* of Synod, as a sufficient bar to re-union.”—*Adams' Religious World Displayed*, vol. iii., p. 211.

gitimate consequences, they have landed in Voluntaryism, and now find themselves directly at antipodes with the sentiments of the fathers of the Secession, and with that Testimony which continued to the close of the last century to be the recognised and unqualified term of communion in the body.\*

There were several ministers who either scrupled to approve, or positively condemned the changes to which we have alluded; but the number who openly appeared against them, and never acquiesced in them, was very small. It would not become a Seceder, who delights in tracing back the history of his society to "the first four brethren," to think the less of the cause which they espoused on account of the paucity of their numbers. When we rehearse their names, the Rev. Archibald Bruce, Minister and Professor of Divinity at Whitburn; Rev. James Aitken, Kirriemuir; Rev. George Whytock, Dalkeith; Rev. Robert Chalmers, Haddington; Rev. James Hogg,

\* Since writing the above, a "History of the Secession, by the Rev. John M'Kerrow, Bridge-of-Teith," has appeared, in which the author attempts to vindicate the General Synod from the charge to which we have referred, by maintaining that the sentiments of Seceders on the points in dispute had undergone a change from a very early period in the history of the community. It will not be expected that I should enter into an examination of that work, or point out all the erroneous statements of facts, with which, in my opinion, it abounds. It is no doubt very easy to adduce passages from the writings of individuals, and documents, which appear, especially when taken apart from their connexion, to favour the new doctrines afterwards imbodyed in the profession of the society. But it would be paying a poor compliment to the understanding of any man to suppose that he can perceive no material difference between the ancient formularies of the Secession, and those adopted by the General Synod in 1804. I can easily understand how, with the sentiments which this author entertains, he should affect to speak slightly of the contendings of Dr. M'Crie and his brethren in opposing the innovations, though even this seems strange, considering the acknowledged importance of the principles involved; but I confess, I was totally unprepared to meet with a repetition of the denial, so confidently put forth at the time, that any change was made on the *public profession* of Seceders by the adoption of the Narrative and Testimony. Without saying a word more, I think that I may now fairly leave the question to be decided by the public.

Kelso; and Rev. Thomas M'Crie, Edinburgh;—we exhibit a rare combination of diversified talent and excellence; and without claiming any decision of the controversy apart from its merits, we venture to affirm, what few candid men acquainted with them will deny, that the roll of the Synod did not contain the names of six ministers more competent, in point of information, judgment, and every other qualification, to examine and decide the question at issue.

Mr. Bruce was the man who, more than any other, not excepting the subject of our memoir, originated and directed the struggle which was now made for the cause of the Reformation; and it is an undoubted fact, that on the matter in dispute, and on every collateral question, he had read and studied more than all the other members of Synod. This learned and venerable divine may be said to have been the first to perceive the dangerous tendency of the changes contemplated; and from the commencement, he stood forth, though for some time alone, to oppose them. For no man on earth did Dr. M'Crie entertain a more profound veneration, to no man's opinion did he pay a greater respect; and whether we consider the influence which Professor Bruce had in directing his studies, and forming his sentiments, or the close intimacy which subsisted between them to the last, it seems but an act of justice due to the memory of that excellent, and in some respects extraordinary person, to introduce a brief notice of him in these memoirs.

Archibald Bruce was born at Broomhill, near the village of Denny, Stirlingshire, in the year 1746, of respectable parents, whose circumstances enabled them to give him a liberal education. His classical and philosophical studies were commenced at a private academy, and finished at the University of Glasgow; after which he attended the theological lectures of the Rev. William Moncrieff of Alloa. To a steadiness of character which he evinced from his youth, Mr. Bruce added an inquisitive disposition

which would not allow him to take his religious principles upon trust. At this period of his life, he began to entertain serious scruples on some points of the profession of Seceders, in which he had been brought up, and entered into a correspondence with Mr. Gillespie, the well-known founder of the Relief Association, from whom he received very flattering encouragement. On more mature deliberation, however, these scruples vanished, and in August 1768, he was ordained in the Associate congregation at Whitburn. In this sequestered situation, Mr. Bruce continued till his death in 1816, quietly discharging the duties of the pastoral office and prosecuting his literary labours. On the death of Mr. Monerieff in 1786, Mr. Bruce was, much against his own inclination, appointed his successor in the divinity chair, by the General Associate Synod; and after the division in that body in 1806, he continued afterwards to teach the theological class, under the inspection of the Constitutional Presbytery.

The following character of the Professor, which was drawn up by Dr. M'Cric to accompany the announcement of his death in the newspapers, will show the high place which he occupied in the esteem of his friend and pupil:—"Professor Bruce possessed natural talents of a superior order, which he had cultivated with unwearied industry. To an imagination which was lively and fertile, he united the most sound and correct judgment. His reading, which was various and extensive, was conducted with such method, and so digested, that he could at any time command the use of it; and during a life devoted to study, he had amassed a stock of knowledge, on all the branches of learning connected with his profession, extremely rare. In his religious principles he was decidedly attached to the standards and constitution of the Church of Scotland, as settled in her reforming periods. His attachment to these, and to the principles of civil and religious liberty, inseparable from them, was evinced by the part he took in

various questions which engaged the public attention, although his aversion to every thing which had the appearance of ostentation induced him frequently to withhold his name from his publications. He was more qualified for writing than public speaking; but though his utterance was slow, and he had no claim to the attractions of delivery, yet his discourses from the pulpit always commanded the attention of the judicious and serious, by the profound views and striking illustrations of Divine truth which they contained, and by the vein of solid piety which ran through them. His piety, his erudition, his uncommon modesty and gentlemanly manners, gained him the esteem of all his acquaintance; and these qualities added to the warm interest which he took in their literary and spiritual improvement, made him revered and beloved by his students.”\*

In 1780, Mr. Bruce published his “Free Thoughts on the Toleration of Popery,” a most elaborate performance, which has furnished, in the variety of its information, a rich store of materials to subsequent writers on that question. An imperfect list of his other works, which are almost too numerous to mention, is subjoined in a note.† Of the general character of these works, it may suffice to say, that they

\* Obituary of the Scots Magazine. April 1816.

† Besides the “Free Thoughts,” Mr. Bruce published an excellent Sermon entitled “True Patriotism.”—“The British Jubilee.”—“Dissertation on the Supremacy of the Civil Powers in matters of religion.”—“The Life of Alexander Morus,” with a translation of his Sermons.—“Review of the proceedings of the General Associate Synod.”—“Reflections on the Freedom of Writing, and the danger of suppressing it by penal laws.”—Memoirs of the Public Life of Mr. James Hogg of Carnock.”—“Occasional Lectures delivered in the Theological Academy at Whitburn.”—“Strictures on the Mode of Swearing by kissing the Gospels.”—“View of the Remarkable Providences of the Time.”—“Brief Statement of the Principles of Seceders respecting Civil Government.”—Various Evangelical and Practical Discourses.”—“Christianization of India.”—“Poems,” &c., &c. It may be mentioned as a curious illustration of the zeal with which Mr. Bruce prosecuted his literary labours, that he brought a printer to Whitburn, and employed him exclusively, for many years, in printing his own publications.

are all distinguished for profound and accurate thinking, and as the fruits of a richly cultivated mind, are invaluable to the theological student; though, partly from the nature of some of the subjects, and partly from the copiousness, amounting sometimes to prolixity, of the illustrations, they have not attained the popularity which they deserve. As a polemical writer, none has succeeded better in drawing the line of distinction between liberty and licentiousness, or balanced with a nicer hand the rights of God and man. A genuine Whig of the old school, yet with nothing of the virulence or vulgarity of the democrat, he was a thorough hater of all despotism and intolerance, civil or religious. He was a bold assertor of the right of private judgment and the liberty of the press, at a time when both were so much abused as to expose the writer who advocated them to no small hazard. At the very time when he was engaged in the controversy with the General Synod, in defence of the lawful exercise of civil authority in regard to the externals of religion, he published his "*Dissertation on the Supremacy of the Civil Powers in matters of religion,*" the object of which is to condemn that supremacy, and vindicate the independence and spirituality of the Church. And strange as it may appear to modern politicians, it was by the very fervour of his zeal for civil and religious liberty, that he was led to take such a decided part in opposition to the Roman Catholic claims—claims, which have since then been advocated and conceded on the very ground upon which the friends of freedom and reform in those days, with more foresight, resisted them.

In his personal appearance, Mr. Bruce was remarkably dignified and venerable. With a spare erect figure of the middle size, and a noble cast of countenance, resembling the Roman, dressed with scrupulous neatness, and wearing the full-bottomed wig, long cane and large shoe-buckles of the olden time, he presented to the last the polite bearing of the

gentleman with the sedateness of the scholar and the minister. And yet, with all his graveness of aspect and demeanour, he had an uncommon fund of wit, which he could indulge in playful humour or poignant satire, and which rendered his company peculiarly engaging.

I may conclude this sketch with the following encomium pronounced by Dr. M'Crie in an address to the students after the Professor's death:—"For solidity and perspicacity of judgment, joined to a lively imagination,—for profound acquaintance with the system of theology, and with all the branches of knowledge which are subsidiary to it, and which are ornamental as well as useful to the Christian divine,—for the power of patient investigation, of carefully discriminating between truth and error, and of guarding against extremes on the right hand as well as the left,—and for the talent of recommending truth to the youthful mind by a rich and flowing style,—not to mention the qualities by which his private character was adorned,—Mr. Bruce has been equalled by few, if any, of those who have occupied the chair of divinity, either in late or in former times."

Next to Mr. Bruce in point of age, and almost as prominent a character in this little band, stood Mr. James Aitken. He was born at Forgandenny, in the neighbourhood of Perth, on the 4th of January 1757. With a strikingly portly aspect and commanding voice, Mr. Aitken possessed mental qualifications which rendered him one of the most edifying and popular preachers of his own or any other denomination. A clear-headed, conscientious and courageous Presbyterian of the old school, he was distinguished for his knowledge of Reformation principles, and for his adherence to them in profession and administration. His favourite study was history, and he was intimately acquainted with the topics involved in the present controversy. He was one of the committee which framed the draught of the new Testimony, and manifested that he had no prejudice

against the measure, could it have been accomplished in any tolerable form.\*

Mr. George Whytock was noted for his cool judgment and power of discrimination. "Though capable of examining a subject with philosophical accuracy, there was no appearance of abstraction or refinement of ideas in his discourses from the pulpit, but throughout a plainness and simplicity, level to a common capacity. His prudence, sagacity and cool dispassionate temper, qualified him for being eminently useful as a member of ecclesiastical judicatories."† Nor ought it to be omitted here, that Mr. Whytock was proverbially a man of peace, and possessed no common talents for composing differences, both private and public. Such was the confidence placed by his brethren on this part of his character, that some have hazarded the conjecture, that had he been spared a little longer, he would have prevented the breach. The train, we fear, was too deeply laid for any to have prevented the explosion; but he was called to his rest before his brethren took their final step. Mr. Whytock is the author of an able work on Presbytery, and he no doubt discovered the relation of the whole Presbyterian cause to the question on which the Synod was divided.

Mr. Robert Chalmers was perhaps one of the best specimens of the old Seceder minister whom our times have been privileged to witness. The characteristic of his mind was plain common sense. There

\* A volume of Mr. Aitken's Sermons, with a Memoir of the author, was lately published by his son, the Rev. John Aitken, Aberdeen.—Edin., Whyte & Co. 1836.

† These traits are taken from a brief notice of Mr. Whytock's death, inserted by Dr. M'Crie in the *Christian Magazine*, for December 1805. The testimony borne at the close of this notice to Mr. Whytock's sincere attachment and steady adherence to the Reformation Principles of the Church of Scotland, and "his appearance in behalf of these principles, in the way of opposing certain changes lately made in the public profession of the body he was connected with," drew forth an angry reply in a succeeding number from the eccentric Mr. Robertson of Kilmarnock, which was answered by Mr. Bruce.—*Christian Magazine*, vol. x., p. 76.



was a simplicity and *directness* about him, which while they enabled him clearly to comprehend every point which he investigated, qualified him for placing it before others, disencumbered of the fallacies thrown around it by men of more ingenious and adventurous, but less lucid and unsophisticated understandings. Steady to the principles of the Reformation, his chief delight lay in "preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ." As a preacher, Mr. Chalmers was, in his day, without a rival. "Simple, grave, sincere," the clearness of his mind shone through the terse phraseology of his discourses, which were marked by a singular degree of evangelical unction, and delivered in a homely but captivating style, retaining to the last all the rauciness of the old Scottish dialect, without its vulgarity. In private life, his unaffected piety, patriarchal plainness, and genuine kindness of heart, endeared him to old and young. Besides the volume of Sermons, formerly mentioned, Mr. Chalmers is the author of a tract on Missionary Societies, published in 1798, in which the anomalous constitution and ill-digested operations of some of these associations are ably pointed out; and in 1807, he published an Address to his congregation on the points in dispute with the Synod, which is distinguished by all the perspicacity, naivetè and vigour of his character.\*

Mr. James Hogg was a classical scholar, an accurate divine, and a man of determined resolution. Pious, humble and inoffensive in his walk, he was beloved by all around him. And it does not, in our estimation, weaken his testimony to the truth, that in the warmth of his spirit and honest zeal for civil liberty, he at one time appeared to cherish different views on the subject of controversy from those which more deliberate examination induced him to adopt.

\* Mr. Chalmers was the last survivor of the small company of worthies whose names are here recorded. He died, full of years and Christian honours, on the 29th of December 1837, in the 82d year of his age and the 58th of his ministry.

It is interesting to find that every member of this little band was marked by his attachment to the cause of genuine liberty; still more so, to find that they were "men of God," each of them distinguished for genuine piety.

It would be affectation were we to pretend to doubt that Dr. M'Crie was competent to investigate the question; but leaving this to be settled by others, it is the province of his biographer to record the history of his mind in the study of the general subject, and of his conduct as directed by his convictions; a history, which will afford one of the best illustrations of his character, and present a model of diligence, integrity and disinterestedness, well worthy to be followed in the investigation and management of any public cause.

The reader is here requested to recur to the transactions to which we alluded in the account of his license and ordination. It will be recollected that at license he obtained a marking in the minutes of Presbytery, to the effect that he was not to be understood, by his answers to the questions in the formula, as giving any judgment upon the question relating to the magistrate's power, then in dependence before the Synod; and that before his ordination, the Synod passed an Act in May 1796, bearing on this point. In this Act, "The Synod declare, that as the Confession of Faith was at first received by the Church of Scotland with some exception as to the power of the civil magistrate relative to spiritual matters, so the Synod, for the satisfaction of all who desire to know their mind on this subject, extend that exception to every thing in that Confession which, taken by itself, seems to allow the punishment of good and peaceable subjects on account of their religious opinions and observances; that they approve of no other way of bringing men into the Church, or retaining them in it, than such as are spiritual, and were used by the apostles and other ministers of the Word in the first ages of the Christian Church; per-

suasion, not force; the power of the Gospel, not the sword of the civil magistrate.”

The principles here laid down, viewed abstractly, Dr. M'Crie never disputed at any period of his life. To persecution for conscience' sake, in its every form, he was uniformly and decidedly opposed; and had this Act implied nothing more than an explanation of the sense in which the Synod understood the language of the Confession of Faith, no objection could have been reasonably found with it. That it was meant to look as if it implied no more, is pretty clear from the preamble, by which it is somewhat artfully introduced, relating to the “exception” made by the Church of Scotland, which was in fact merely a declaration intended to guard against the assumption of an Erastian power on the part of the State, a point in which the language of the Confession was not considered sufficiently explicit. But the Act of the Synod was certainly an implied condemnation of the Confession, as teaching principles of intolerance, and neutralized the former profession of Seceders in favour of the civil part of the Reformation. Indeed, as interpreted by those who enacted it, this Act decided the whole question as to the magistrate's power, and proved the forerunner of changes on the profession of the Synod, which, from the vagueness of the terms employed, might have been intended, though they could hardly have been anticipated.

A misrepresentation of the state of Dr. M'Crie's mind at this period, has been very generally circulated. It has been said that he was originally a decided convert to the new principles, and prepared to maintain all their consequences. The fact is, that as soon as he began to discover their consequences, he began to question the principles. When he gave a qualified assent to the formula at license and ordination, his own judgment on the questions at issue, was quite undecided. As he stated to a friend who conversed with him on the matter, it was not on “new light grounds, or, at least, not from any settled opi-

nion on the subject," that he sought this privilege; "but because he was aware that the new opinions had of late become general in the body, and he thought it wrong that they should continue to tie down young men at ordination to principles which they themselves no longer held." His request was avowedly made on the ground, that the question respecting the power of the magistrate in religious matters was "in dependance before the General Associate Synod;" and the following extract from a letter written so early as 1798, without any view of making out a case for himself, will show that even then he considered the question as *sub judice*, and even entertained hopes that the discussion would issue in a judgment favourable to the union between Church and State: "The Synod upon the whole was thinly attended this Session. The principal thing which they did was revising the draught of an acknowledgment of sins, &c., and ordering it to be printed. There was also a good deal of conversation about *the old topic*, and I think it was more favourable than before to the prospect of unity of sentiment. I think there has a suspicion risen in the minds of some that they had too hastily embraced a favourite and interesting *new opinion*, and that perhaps, after all, there is, in the nature of things, a foundation for a union between Church and State. Perhaps, however, I am too sanguine."\*

I have searched in vain through his correspondence and manuscripts for any traces of decidedly new light sentiment,—somewhat, I confess, to my disappointment, as otherwise the argument from a complete revolution in his views, wrought by time and conviction, might, in my opinion, have come with still better effect. It is undeniable, however, that his leanings were originally in favour of the new doctrines, and that the result of all his previous reading and reflection, which was tantamount to that of most young men at his age, went to confirm these early pre-

\* To the Rev. James Gray, 1st November, 1798.

possessions. And granting that he had been much more decided on the modern side, such a state of mind was surely not without its advantages. We need not recite the names of Saul of Tarsus, Luther, Knox, and Henderson, to recall to the reader's mind a long list of the most useful men that ever lived, who, in similar circumstances, have found the erroneous convictions of early life overruled for establishing their own minds in the truth, and qualifying them for more effectively maintaining the cause which they were left for a time to misapprehend.

It is amusing, and not a little instructive to be able to trace, *usque ab ovo*, the formation of his opinions on this important question, and to discover in these elements the outline of the more digested argument which is exhibited in his public defence of the Reformed principle on the subject. Almost immediately after the passing of the Act 1796, and before the close of the year in which he was ordained, he began to question the position, that civil administration ought to have no respect, and to show no particular favour, to revealed truth and divine institutions,—for this was, as it still is, the sum of the whole contest. There is reason to think that what startled him, and set him to a more careful investigation of the question, was a discovery of the sweeping effect which the tenet of excluding all civil management about religion would produce, in condemning the principles and transactions of the Reformation, and the peculiar profession of Seceders in reference to them. The abstract arguments which, to a great extent, decided his opinion, we know were such as the following:—The subjection and duty of nations, as such, to the Supreme Being; the modified analogy between the Old and New Testaments; the necessary exclusion by the opposite doctrine of all interference of civil authority for the protection of the Sabbath; the paramount claims of divine truth, once revealed, to the support of men, in all their different capacities; and the necessity of

a combination of church and state, in their respective spheres, in promoting the common object of religion, for the well-being of both, and the fulfilment of the most glorious predictions of Scripture.

A course of deliberate study not only confirmed his judgment on the general question, but set its importance in a light which deeply affected him. It was the remark of his affectionate partner in life, who felt in all that agitated him like his other self, that a meeting of Synod visibly injured his health, and this was his own experience more than he chose to express. He watched with deep anxiety the progress and turns of the discussion in the Synod, at one time glad to indulge the hope that a breach might be prevented and the profession preserved, and at another deterred from joining those who openly protested against the new deeds, not so much from the dread of the imputation of inconsistency, which he knew awaited him, as from the diffidence inspired by a remorseful sense of his past conduct. The process by which he reached his full and final convictions was, as we shall see, extremely slow and gradual. His was one of those minds which require time to strike their roots, develope their strength, and attain maturity. The first step of this process was a conviction that the Act 1796 was, in the contemplated application of its principles, erroneous, and in its consequences, if followed out in the spirit of those who introduced it, dangerous to the profession of the body. This was accompanied with the painful reflection that the scruples which he had expressed in common with others, had been the occasion of this very Act being passed, and that he had acted rashly, and without due consideration of the momentous truths and serious difficulties connected with the question. But awkward and mortifying as he felt his position to be, the same love of integrity which, under other views and feelings, had induced him to court a straight-forward publicity, determined him to be equally open and explicit now; and he stood for-

ward modestly yet firmly to retract what he had done, and so far as lay in his power to obviate its effects upon others.

The first decided appearance which he made against the new deeds, was in his Synod Sermon (having been Moderator at the previous meeting) in April 1800. This discourse is not to be found among his manuscripts; but the text was Psalm li. 18,—“Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion;” and in the course of his sermon he took an opportunity not only of retracting the sentiments which he had expressed in his printed discourse,\* but of declaring his regret at having been in any degree accessory to the passing of the Act 1796. This was followed up by his presenting to this meeting of Synod a Representation and Petition, craving “that the Synod would review this their act,” (which had been extended in the previous year so as to include the Catechisms and other public papers,) “examine the passages in the Confession, &c., which are supposed to be objectionable, and give such a determination as shall tend most to the maintenance of truth and the preservation of the unity of the body.” The principal reasons on which this is craved are, “that the act condemns the Confession of Faith without inquiry—and that it is understood to involve the new principle proposed in the Overture of the Testimony—a principle which would go a great way to condemn the manner in which the Reformation was carried on, and would lead us to follow a divisive course from the reformed and covenanted Church of Scotland.” The petitioner thus alludes to the peculiar position in which he stood:—“The subscriber of this petition was one of those who entertained scruples upon this head, which were referred to the Synod by the Presbytery of Edinburgh; and the above mentioned act so far satisfied his mind that he had freedom to take the formula as altered. Since that time, however, he has had opportunity of considering the act more deliberately, of comparing

\* See before, p. 41.

it with the Confession of Faith, and of weighing more carefully the influence which the change introduced is calculated to have upon the whole of our principles; the consequence has been, that he has seen occasion to alter the sentiments which he formerly entertained respecting it, and to repent the steps which he took. Some may think that in consideration of the scruples formerly entertained by the subscriber of this, and the occasion given by him to the change introduced, he ought to have remained silent. In this manner he himself has hitherto thought and acted, and willingly would he still have continued to do so, could he have reconciled such conduct with conscience and duty. This, however, he can no longer do, especially as the act referred to is closely connected with deeds which the Synod have since passed, and may yet pass. If he has been instrumental, even in an indirect way, in bringing about a change which he looks upon as prejudicial to the interests of the religious body with whom he is connected, and the cause of truth among them, it is his duty to endeavour as far as in his power to repair the injury. Besides he was previously, and still is, under solemn obligations,\* which it is his duty to perform, and from which no act of his own or others can release him. He hopes therefore that his reverend fathers and brethren will candidly interpret his conduct, and patiently listen to his difficulties.”†

“It is known to the Synod,” he said, in presenting this petition,” that I was one of those who refused to signify an unlimited approbation of this part of the Confession of Faith, and that the act of which I now complain was passed expressly to give relief to me and others labouring under similar difficulties, and shortly after this I was ordained upon assenting to the formula as limited by that act. It is against this act that I now complain, after a period of only four years. I shall not attempt to excuse my conduct in

\* He refers particularly to his vows as a Covenanter.

† This petition is given at full length in the Appendix.



this matter. I acknowledge, I confess, I am sorry for my rashness in it. Ever since I was convinced of it, I have made no scruple about expressing my regret, for being instrumental in unhinging the principles of a religious body, or in hastening on a change. It has given me great distress that I have been accessory in leading others to imbibe principles, which I now look upon as prejudicial to the interests of religion, and inconsistent with those of the Secession,—accessory, I mean, by my conduct above alluded to; for I have never had freedom to preach against what had been the opinions always before entertained by the body I was connected with, and what I evidently saw ran through the whole of our peculiar Testimony. It would have been easy for me to have made opposition to the new principle in some other shape, as it is involved in the act for a new acknowledgment of sins, or more fully in the large overture now lying before the Synod; but this appeared to me cowardly and disingenuous, whereas the fair way was to go to the root of the complaint, although this might touch my own sore, and expose me to the charge of fickleness and inconsistency. And until I had acknowledged my mistake, I had no freedom to take any decided step in opposing what the Synod might do in following up the new principle. I am sensible, however, that it becomes me to be modest and cautious in the steps which I take; and if ever I appear to depart from this line of conduct, (as no doubt I may,) I think I will thank any brother to put me in mind of my former rashness. I wish to take no lead in the business; I would wish to be silent. It pains me exceedingly to be obliged to appear at this time and in this manner. But, according to my present views, I am exonerating my conscience, and performing an important duty to the body at large; and this I think, after the most mature deliberation I have been capable of, and viewing the question in both lights, and with all its consequences.”\*

\* See Appendix.

Thus associated in his opposition to the new deeds with his venerable teacher, Mr. Bruce, and other brethren, who had protested against them, he was led into a confidential correspondence with them, from which a better idea may be formed, if not of the state of the controversy, at least of the spirit in which it was managed by them, than from any thing they offered to the public. The two following letters not only exhibit much authentic information on the general subject, but set in an attractive light the workings of two ingenuous spirits, and furnish a summary answer to the unjust and ungenerous construction too frequently put on the motives and conduct of men who find themselves necessitated to oppose some popular scheme of the day. The strictly confidential nature of the correspondence might, under other circumstances, have forbidden its publication; but I have been induced, from a desire to do full justice to my subject, to insert both letters entire. The first is from Dr. M'Crie to his friend and counsellor, Professor Bruce.

“EDINBURGH, 14th July, 1800.

“REVEREND DEAR FATHER,—I have been unwilling to break in upon your retirement, and to trouble you with a subject which I know you are backward to correspond about, but can no longer resist my desire to consult you. You are partly acquainted with the state of my mind concerning the differences that unhappily subsist in the Synod, though I was able but very imperfectly to give you an account of it last time I was at Whitburn. The concern I must feel in reflecting on the step I took at last meeting of Synod, compared with my former conduct, is heightened by my situation, having no brother to whom I can freely and with satisfaction impart my fears, my anxieties and my difficulties. Alas! I fondly flattered myself it would be otherwise—that there were many like-minded, that would encourage, go along with, or before me. My disappointment has been proportionally great. How difficult to preserve a due mean

amidst the changes and disappointments of life ! *Semper in contraria vehimur*. We are either buoyed up with too big hopes, or swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.

“My distress respecting the matter of our differences and the state of religion among us, is in some respects peculiar, inasmuch as I must look on myself as instrumental in contributing, in a considerable degree, to produce or at least to hasten them on. This I cannot drive out of my mind by all the excuses which are ready enough to present themselves. It not only gives me uneasiness when I take a retrospect of my conduct, but it is a source of great discouragement, when I look forward. There is a feeling of more than awkwardness—a sense of inconsistency and shame—of which I cannot divest myself in appearing publicly in opposition to a measure which I so lately did materially solicit and indirectly procure. My conduct in this respect will operate, I am afraid, as a powerful prejudice to many. Besides, and what should chiefly affect me, have I not reason to fear that, on account of my former miscarriage, the Lord may frown on my present attempts, and thus the good cause be hurt by my interference? I am convinced there is something wrong in these fears, because they discourage me from proceeding in the path of duty, but I cannot so fix upon the deceit as to get rid of it. But do you not think that my former conduct, together with my youth, inexperience, and the extreme difficulty of the question, render it proper that I should not take any thing like a lead in the business? Dear Sir, I have used the freedom to obtrude upon you this account of my feelings, encouraged to it by similarity of sentiments, (so far as I understand it,) upon the subject that has occasioned these, and by your speaking freely to me last time we had an opportunity. I trust you will take it in good part, and give me your sympathy and advice.

“I have been lending my attention, so far as other avocations would permit, to the subject of the ma-

gistrate's power *circa sacra*. The more I think and read upon it, I am the more convinced of the difficulty of settling in many cases the just limits of magistral and ministerial power, and am astonished at my ignorance in formerly pronouncing upon the question with so much decision and indifference. At the same time, I am more convinced of the general principles which for awhile I was brought to doubt, but to the belief of which I have been made to return—of their importance to the civil and religious interests of mankind, and their close connexion with the cause of the Reformation and the Secession Testimony. Besides what I have met with in systems, the treatise *ex professo* on the head which I have read with the greatest satisfaction is *Apollonii Jus Majestatis circa sacra*. It has been a means of preserving me from some Erastian rocks upon which I would have been in danger of driving in seeking to escape the Sectarian shore. In the "Declaration and Defence of the Associate Presbytery's principles," &c., I think the proper business of the magistrate, with the limits of his authority, are more clearly stated than they were formerly by any reformed church; though certain expressions in that paper (human wisdom cannot prevent such mistakes and misconstructions) have been so considered as to be eversive of all the magistrate's power *circa sacra*. And certain parts of your writings have pointed out to me satisfactorily the *proper ground* upon which religious matters become objects of magistral power, and materially helped me to understand how this power may be exercised upon them without leading to persecution or infringing the rights and encroaching on the business of the church.

"My chief objections to the act of Synod 1796 are its vague and undetermined language, which either implies or opens a door for the introduction *ad libitum* of all the Sectarian principles, and the condemnation of the Confession of Faith without a fair trial, and the specification of the clauses and expressions condemned. One thing, however, which is

mentioned in the petition given in to the Synod, I hesitate about, I mean the propriety of instituting an examination into the passages of the Confession. I am clear this ought to be done before a condemnation; but as to the propriety of this investigation with a view to Synodical judgment, I much doubt, (even granting there had been a rational prospect of unanimity,) considering the difficulty of the subject, and of obtaining a just acquaintance with the sentiments intended to be conveyed by the expressions which the compilers used at such a distance of time. Would it not be better to give a declaration of our sentiments, showing what is the doctrine we hold, and that we do not entertain principles leading to persecution, &c.? Was not this the method pursued by the Associate Presbytery in their "Act anent the Doctrine of Grace?" At any rate, before the Synod come to an examination of the Confession, I would much wish some conversation with you about the litigated passages. That which is contained in the 20th chapter has been much complained of. I acknowledge I think it wants that distinctness which is to be desired. But while some particulars there mentioned confessedly come under the power of the civil magistrate; while this power may regulate and restrain practices *connected with*, and which *indirectly affect* other particulars; while it is not necessary to conclude that all the particulars mentioned come under civil cognizance, at least upon the same ground and in the same point of view; in fine, while it is not the scope of that section to state the different and respective objects of ecclesiastical and civil jurisdiction, this being stated in other places of the Confession;—I apprehend the passage may be understood in a sound sense. Equal injustice is, I think, done to the 23d chapter, when it is urged that "the preserving of unity and peace in the Church, keeping the truth of God pure and entire," &c., are there stated as direct and immediate objects of the magistrate's power, in opposition to what is laid down in

the beginning of the section and other parts of the Confession.

“But my paper reminds me that I have taken up too much of your time. I must again apologize for my freedom. It would be a particular favour if you would write me your advice, particularly how I ought to conduct the petition. If this is disagreeable to you, and you would rather communicate your sentiments *viva voce*, be so good as drop me a line, and I shall endeavour to see you any time that is most convenient to you.

“Though I have been already too tedious, I cannot conclude without mentioning how kind I took it that you so freely signified your dissatisfaction with my printed sermon. I am more and more convinced of the bad tendency of some things in it, especially in the present times, and of the mistaken view of the passage of history upon which it is founded, which did not strike me till you mentioned it, though I had for a considerable time suspected some of the inferences drawn from it. I would willingly do any thing which I thought necessary to counteract it.

“Wishing you comfortable support under all your trials, and divine direction in what you may be led to, in the present state of the church, I am, Rev. dear Father, yours with respect and affection,

“THO. M'CRIE.”

We now subjoin Mr. Bruce's reply.

“To the Rev. Mr. Tho. M'Crie.

“REV. DEAR BROTHER,—It is some time since I received your agreeable letter, and I have hitherto unaccountably postponed the answer, though every day intending it. Ever since I had the unexpected hint of the late bias of your sentiments upon some subjects of litigation in the present time, you have been frequently in my thoughts. While in one view I rejoiced at the event, I could not but feel for you on account of the perplexities and uneasy consequences to which it would necessarily expose you. These

I have felt in circumstances somewhat similar, in too sensible a manner to think lightly of them. Nothing of all that you have described as passing through your mind, or that has occurred hitherto in this affair, needs to appear in the least surprising: for all that, and perhaps much more than that, you should have been prepared, while resolving to hold every portion of known truth as valuable, and to account sincerity in a religious profession a virtue. Some who might perhaps be ready to applaud this when pleaded as a reason for assenting to the received principles of a church, may think very differently of it when urged against submission to undefined and unlimited innovations. I give you full credit for sincerity, according to your views of the subject, in the part you have acted in this affair, first and last; though in the former instance, I could not but be grieved to see it combined with what I thought a certain degree of rashness and inconsideration, in a matter of such magnitude and difficulty, which maturer reflection and progressive knowledge have at length discovered to yourself. Such errors youthful minds are liable to: in the first ebullitions of an ardent genius, or the earlier efforts of mental courage, yet untried and unchecked, they are ready to attempt and think themselves equal to every thing. And it is good that a wise Providence provides us betimes with a check and antidote which none, by a little experience and intercourse with mankind, will be long in meeting with.

“Shall I apply here some of the words uttered by Evander over his son Pallas?—

O Pallas! thou hast failed thy plighted word,  
 To fight with caution, and not tempt the sword.  
 I warned thee, but in vain: for well I knew  
 What perils youthful ardour would pursue;  
 That boiling blood would carry thee too far,  
 Young as thou wert to dangers, raw to war.  
 O curs'd essay of arms! disastrous doom!  
 Prelude of bloody field and fights to come.\*

\* Dryden's *Virgil*, Æn. xi. 153. On the margin of these lines in the original letter, I find the following note in my father's

“Your late appearance in Synod affords a striking proof of ingenuity, [ingenuousness,] and while it must give satisfaction to a number who consider it in every view as needful and seasonable, it cannot justly be censured by any friend to candour and honesty, as either incompetent or dishonourable. It has never been mentioned to the discredit of Father Augustine that he saw it needful, ere he died, to write a book of Retractations. “Yea, what is every year of a wise man’s life,” to use the expression of Mr. Pope in one of his letters, “but a censure or critique on the past?” This, indeed, bears hard on our pride, and clips the budding wings of our beloved fame;—but so much the better for us: that may be the most needful and beneficial thing that can befall us. In such cases we are chiefly to consider what is due to the cause of truth, and to our own minds: and being satisfied as to this, all other things, such as the consequences that may follow, or the sentiments that others may form of our conduct, must be held of inferior moment. You have perhaps read Scott’s “Force of truth;” if you have not, it may at this time deserve a perusal.

“I once felt something of the struggle you now undergo; like that of one who has adventurously pushed out into the middle of a stream, but instead of reaching the other side, finds himself constrained to return: though this was happily over with me before I had come forward into public life. Having made exceptions to some parts of our principles, and made some advances, though cautiously, towards a laxer and more fashionable system, never till the time when I was about to discard them, did they appear in such a convincing and satisfactory light. After entering into a course of correspondence with a leader of a certain modern party, and submitting

handwriting: “Psalm cxli. 5, T. M’C.” The words referred to are, “Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head.”



for a time the direction of my studies to their advice, and in the juncture when I received a letter intimating their design of taking steps towards license, I found myself obliged to return no other answer, whatever constructions might be put upon it, than a frank recantation: a step that, in reflection from that day to this, never gave me an anxious thought, but much the reverse. This was one of the critical incidents of my life, as to which I have reason ever gratefully to acknowledge the care and goodness of Him who is the leader of the blind. I doubt not but in aiming singly at following and honouring the Lord, you will see cause, in the event, to make a similar acknowledgment. And in vain will the same snare be spread in the sight of any bird that is hardly escaped from it.

“There is scarce any thing more needful for persons setting out in public life, and in their progress through it, than to form a moderate estimate of their own abilities, whatever they may be, as well as of the impression and influence they may have upon others, who are not always so ready to yield even to truth and reason, as we may suppose. We may think we have the irresistible evidence of these on our side, and we may conclude that they will instantly see and act as we do, at the first proposal; while neither the mass of the people, nor the learned, who have several views and prejudices, will see any thing or be disposed to acknowledge any thing of all this: and it will ever be found easier for an individual or a body to deviate from the straight path, than to prevail on themselves or to prevail on others to return to it. When you seem surprised and disappointed that so few should appear to support your late motion, you here again betray some degree of inexperience and want of acquaintance with the human heart.

“In any attempts to carry into effect necessary measures, particularly in the business of the Church Courts, as, on the other hand, none should affect

*inter pares* to take the lead, yet neither are any, on the other, to decline discharging the duty belonging to their place in a body, merely because others may decline going before them or even taking any share with them. It is for our own conduct alone we are responsible, not for that of others. Besides the common right or obligation of members to insist upon a motion or petition, there may be something in this case peculiarly incumbent on you. But as for that part of your petition that requires a review of the doctrines of the Confession and a judgment upon them, though, if it was necessary at all, it ought doubtless to have preceded the sentence already pronounced upon them, I cannot see, nor did I ever see, any desirable end to be gained by such discussions: and from the desultory conversations, and the vague ineffective disputes that have for a long time occupied the Synod, I am more and more convinced that it could answer no good purpose to bring these or any general principles into present discussion: especially as this cause is already prejudged, or lies *sub judice* in another shape. A mere declaratory act, without either a direct or implied condemnation, [of the Confession,] was all that was at first proposed, and all that was needful.

“In conclusion of my reasons of protest against this act as extended, I crave that the act be not only repealed, but that the overture that gave rise to it be dismissed. When your paper was read, I could not but be struck with the similarity of reasoning, and even a coincidence almost in language in some parts of it, with what I had used in some of these reasons, though without any direct communication: this I consider as a proof of the evidence of truth when deliberately and impartially viewed. It is not impossible but others, through time, may fall into the same train of reading and thinking; but I am afraid the mischief will be done before we have the satisfaction to see this. At present, for all our boasted illumination, I think, upon the whole, that we in this age

are inferior to the preceding in a clear and extensive knowledge of the subject.

“Apollonius is an author who has been much esteemed by Presbyterians:—I have seen him often quoted, though I never could meet with him. Voe-tius, too, in his Ecclesiastical Polity, has entered closely into the argument, and deserves to be read.

“In your comment on the disputed paragraphs, I do not perceive any thing objectionable: but to enter on any particular vindication of them would exceed the limits of a letter. An interview with you, in which we might have talked over the subject, would have been very agreeable to me, but I was averse to desire you to take the trouble of a journey solely on that account. I have been more at home this summer than formerly, partly through the resolution I thought myself shut up to take, for which I doubt not I shall be generally blamed: but this is the critical era in which a new system and constitution is to be established and practically submitted to, or else decisively negatived. We forbear this season to dispense the communion, as the most peaceable and least offensive course in reference to neighbours in present circumstances.

“One observation I was going to make, in reference to chapter 20th of the Confession, that is generally overlooked in the declarations against it:—That it is not the holding or publishing such opinions or maintaining such practices as are there described simply in themselves considered, that renders persons obnoxious either to ecclesiastical or civil process, but such as are accompanied with public offence and prejudice to the respective societies; or in other words, such as are attended with contempt or resistance of any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of that power; for the persons chargeable with these are the subject of the whole paragraph, as appears from the connexion.

“I was able to speak but very indistinctly upon the particulars in the printed sermon, not having

looked over the jottings from the time I had taken them. But the manner in which you again speak on this, and the spirit you have discovered in reference to it, not only removes the particular offence as to me, but cannot fail to raise you more in my esteem. Whether any thing farther may be proper for the sake of others, and in order to wrest a weapon out of the hand of latitudinarians, which had been unwarily conceded to them, or what that might be, shall be left at present to your own consideration; I will not say a word of it on paper.—Wishing you divine conduct and support, I am, Rev. and dear brother, yours affectionately,

“ARCH. BRUCE.”

On these letters I need scarcely offer any comment. The conscientiousness, the brotherly candour, the humility, which they breathe, must commend them to all who attach any importance to a faithful profession of religion. To some, the feelings of self-reproach with which Dr. M'Crie reflected on the share he had in procuring the Act 1796, may seem to be strained beyond the real magnitude of the offence; but after perusing this correspondence, few can fail to admire the moral heroism required to sacrifice at the shrine of conscience, the suggestions of natural pride and early prejudice, a sacrifice which, in this instance, being the result of mature and anxious inquiry, exhibits a striking illustration of “the force of truth.”

“I am still,” he writes, in August 1800, to another correspondent, “directly or indirectly inquiring into the old subject; endeavouring to find out ‘the good old path’ from which I foolishly wandered, and for this purpose searching after books which I had thrown away:—

Insanientis dum sapientiæ  
Consultus erro, nunc retrorsum  
Vela dare, atque iterare cursus  
Cogor relictos.”\*

\* Hor. Carm. lib. i, ode 34.

The course of reading to which he now devoted himself, embraced the polemical writings of the most famous divines who flourished during the 15th and 16th centuries. From these giants in theology, who have anticipated all the arguments and objections of modern times, he received much of his information on the doctrine regarding the duty of the civil magistrate.\* Nor did he fail to investigate what may be termed the philosophy of the question, comprising the principles of Scriptural interpretation and the analogies between natural and revealed religion, a knowledge of which is essential to a right understanding of the controversy. On this subject he always acknowledged himself peculiarly indebted to Bishop Butler's "Analogy between Natural and Revealed Religion." Alluding, many years afterwards, in one of his lectures, to the advantages of applying the principle of analogy to the interpretation of the Old Testament, he paid the following compliment to that celebrated treatise:—"It was from this book, (nothing the worse of being written by a bishop,) that I learned this principle of interpretation, and have been confirmed in many truths of which it does not speak a word, and which probably never entered the mind of the author. It is by it that I

\* Dr. M'Crie's library was stored with the writings of the Dutch and German divines of the 17th century, the only writers who can be said to have treated the question of the magistrate's power in regard to religion in a scientific manner. His principal favourite was *Voetius*, who, in his elaborate treatises on Ecclesiastical Polity, has almost exhausted the subject. *Bernard de Moor* was another author to whom he owed himself much indebted. The work of *Apollonius*, to which he refers, was intended chiefly to answer a book written by Professor *Vedelius* of Frankfort, entitled *De Episcopatu Constantini Magni*, which favoured the Erastian heresy, and maintained the untenable doctrine of the magistrate's power in matters of religion. Apollonius commends the Scots for having struck the golden mean in this delicate question, with more success than the German, Swiss, or English divines. The other theological and critical writers which Dr. M'Crie consulted on this question were such as Rivet, Vitringa, Gerhard, Walleus, Turretine, &c. The Erastianism of Warburton, and the utilitarianism of Paley, kept them, of course, out of his list of authorities.

have learned to expound the historical books of the Old Testament with some degree of profit, without having recourse to type, allegory or accommodation. It was by it that I was prevented from becoming an Independent, a Baptist, or an enemy to religious establishments; and by it I learned that I could be friendly to such establishments, and to the Protestant constitution of my country, though I never partook of their worldly emoluments—a fact which appears a mystery and a miracle to some wise heads and would-be statesmen.”

It may be more interesting to the general reader to learn that the controversy on which he now entered, was the means of drawing his attention to the study of ecclesiastical history, and particularly that of his own country. It appears from various note-books, that he had begun in 1802 to collect facts connected with the history of the Church of Scotland from the Reformation, and to arrange them in chronological order. The extent of reading shown in these notes and references, indicate that he had for some time previous been engaged in the study of general history. To this study he brought a mind unfettered by prejudice; for it was some time before he attained those decided views on the question of the magistrate's power which he ever after held through life.

The following extracts from his correspondence at this period may serve to show the gradual manner in which his opinions were matured and enlarged on this question:—“*April 1801.*—You seem to think that I imagine I have got satisfaction as to the question of the magistrate's power. Any thing I have said as to this must be understood of general principles. I am far from being free from difficulties, nor do I think the subject free from them. Your remark concerning the Jewish kings is certainly just. Every part of worship almost was typical under the Old Testament; was there therefore no *real* worship offered up to God at that time, no real external as well as internal worship? But the difficulty is to

ascertain *how far* their example is a pattern to Christian kings, and how far it was peculiar to them. There certainly was an exercise of their office which was peculiar; but the Overture makes it all peculiar. You have read what the London Ministers upon Presbyterian government say respecting the magistrate's power. Gillespie, in his *Aaron's Rod*, has some excellent things upon it. The *Answers to Nairn* defend the magistrate's power upon natural not revealed principles; but natural principles are exemplified, illustrated and enforced in Scripture. The moral law is founded on natural principles; but who refuses to appeal to the more perfect edition of it in the Scriptures? By maintaining this ground, we can answer the objection drawn from the silence of the New Testament upon the subject, and avail ourselves of the examples in the Old; at the same time that we do not plead for imitation in things which depended upon positive prescription, or were peculiar to that dispensation. And it can be proved that Presbyterians of the 17th century stated it upon the same grounds, although some of the first reformers seem to have thought the example of the Jewish kings in all respects imitable by Christian kings. The Erastian controversy did great good.\*

In March 1804, he speaks more decidedly:—"It is easy for persons to catch hold of abstract and disjointed expressions and propositions, and to give them a sense which will be contradictory. A Socinian will insist that there is a contradiction between the fourth and fifth questions in our Shorter Catechism. It is now commonly alleged, that there is an inconsistency between the declaration in the Confession of Faith, that 'God alone is Lord of the conscience,' and what follows as to the claim of liberty of conscience to exeeem persons from the lawful jurisdiction of courts civil and ecclesiastical; yet it is no difficult matter to show the agreement of these. —I do not see why we should be excluded from all

\* To Rev. James Aitken, 8th April, 1801.

reasoning from the example of the Jewish kings as to religion any more than as to mere politics. In both these there were peculiarities, for which allowance must be made. We have also approved actings of heathen magistrates respecting the true religion, which shows that this exercise of civil power is founded on natural principles: only, in applying these, respect is to be had to the form in which religion appeared at that time, and to the circumstances in which the enactments took place.

“If the exercise of the magistrate’s office must be defended by natural principles, then *pure heresy* cannot be an act of State delinquency, so as to expose a man to punishment, or to the loss of natural rights. By *pure heresy* I mean opinions opposite to the doctrines of revelation which have not connected with them any thing prejudicial to the public good; but there may be many opinions for which persons set up the plea of conscience which are yet contrary to the light of nature, and which either lead unto or are associated with what is hurtful to civil society, or to a particular lawful and well-regulated constitution. These may be restrained according to the degree of the danger. As to other erroneous opinions, they may be opposed by those ‘powerful discouragements’ which do not infringe upon natural rights. But one cannot discuss such points in the bounds of a letter, nor do I pretend to be qualified for it.”

We have already spoken of the overture for a New Testimony, which proved the occasion of the controversy in which Dr. M’Crie became involved with his brethren. In opposing this overture, he and his associates for some years contented themselves with protesting, separately at first, and afterwards conjointly, against the proposed changes, at the different stages through which it passed. That the reader may obtain, at one glance, a view of the doctrines which were opposed by these ministers, I shall present them in the language of one of their papers, from which it will be seen, that they were materially the points at issue in the present Voluntary controversy.



“It appears now too evident, not only from the known sentiments and private writings of some members, but from the late public deeds and votes of the Synod, that they have adopted a different scheme, and have given countenance to what have been usually accounted Anabaptistical, Sectarian or Independent tenets on these heads, which had been formerly renounced and solemnly abjured by them; and that they have in so far befriended the principles and designs of some modern infidels and politicians, which tend to make a total separation of civil government and religion, as if the interests of the latter in no shape pertained to the former, farther than to grant and secure equal liberty and privileges to all religious systems; that hereby they have unduly restricted the exercise and interfered with the rights of civil government, have represented all active countenance and support to any particular religion, or any sanction to church-deeds by human laws, as an Erastian encroachment, a confounding of the temporal and spiritual jurisdiction, and as necessarily involving persecution for conscience’ sake; while the rights of conscience have been so explained as to favour anarchy and licentiousness in all matters pertaining to religion, in defiance of all restraint by human authority of any kind. The question is now no longer, under what limitations, or in what manner may magistrates exercise their power *circa sacra*? but, whether there be any power of this kind competent to them?—The authority itself, in whatever degree, or however applied, is at last by the Synod declared to be a nonentity. In consequence, a national religion, national covenants, and national churches, in the usual and proper acceptation of the words, are exploded as an absurdity: all tests which tend to make religious distinctions, or which may be used as qualifications for offices of power and trust, supreme or subordinate, are virtually condemned; and all constitutions and laws that imply the exercise of such a power, in every Protestant and Christian nation, ought wholly to be

abolished. The precepts, examples, predictions and promises in the Old Testament Scriptures, which have hitherto been adduced as warrants for such things, are held to be inapplicable, and in this view inconsistent with the nature of the New Testament dispensation; by which, countenance has been given to the error which represents the Church of God under the Old Testament to have been essentially different from that under the New," &c.\*

Thus involved in controversy with brethren whom he respected, and with many of whom he had lived on terms of friendship, the subject of our memoir perceived, with the deepest grief, the prospect of agreement with them becoming darker at every step. All the motives of peace, (and none felt them more strongly than he,) all his personal and relative interests urged him to go with the tide, and it is not easy to conceive the distress he had to suffer in following an opposite course. So far as he saw proper to make it known, it could not be better described than in the language which he employs in the following extracts from his correspondence:—

“*August 8, 1800.*—Things look very gloomy among us, both as a church and a nation. My mind turns aside from contemplating the prospect, and stops short in tracing consequences. There seems much need for the exercise of faith in a text from which you once preached to us, ‘At evening time it shall be light.’—May we be directed to the path of duty by Him who *brings the blind by a way they know not!*”†

“*April 8, 1801.*—I certainly agree with you in the propriety of brethren who have seen it their duty to oppose certain present innovations in our principles studying to understand one another’s views in order to their acting with harmony. At the same time I cannot help thinking that the mode which

\* Substance of the paper given in by the protesting ministers to the general Associate Synod, May 1806, appended to Dr. M’Crie’s Statement of the Difference, &c., p. 225.

† To the Rev. James Aitken.

has been hitherto pursued, has been attended with good consequences. While the question has remained *sub judice*, and we have acted, in common with other members, in giving our opinions, there has been no appearance of party, consequently no occasion given for imputing contentings to party prejudice. On the other hand, is there no evidence of the Divine hand in leading those who have contended singly, and in bringing forward others, in a more or less expected manner, as the affair has approached to a decision? And may we not look to the same quarter for harmony and concert when the crisis shall render a united effort necessary? I have been endeavouring to discover some period of the Church similar to that in which our lot is cast, that an example for imitation might be drawn from it, but cannot say that any altogether similar can be fixed upon. Perhaps the period of the *Public Resolutions* approaches nearest to it. But the Leader of the blind can bring by paths that have not been trode, although doubtless it is our duty to 'go out by the footsteps of the flock,' as far as we can trace them following our common Shepherd."\*

"*March* 9, 1804.—I would have written you sooner, but what with labours in the congregation, and with the Magazine, which easily fatigue my infirm body, and waste my animal spirits, and what with anxiety and distress of mind, I have either had no leisure, or have not had fortitude to occupy it.—You know how ready selfishness is to creep in, and will not therefore be surprised to hear me say that sometimes I think my situation worse than that of other brethren. I need to be taught the lesson of the apostle, 'There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to men.'—In all these things I can see Providence contending against me for various unadvised and sinful parts of my conduct. But the Lord is holy, and has wise ends to serve in all these things. I have been endeavouring to preach for

\* To the same.

some time on Isaiah viii. 17,—‘I will wait upon the Lord that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.’ What a heavy thing it is to enter lightly and without deliberation upon the work of the ministry! What would I give to have some of my years blotted out—but how vain! for nothing but experience will correct some persons. What a relief would it be, provided conscience would permit, to retire to solitude, instead of entering into the storm of contention and strife!”\*

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### CHAPTER III.

FROM THE COMMENCEMENT OF HIS CONTROVERSY  
WITH THE SYNOD TO THE PUBLICATION OF THE  
LIFE OF KNOX.

1804—1811.

WE have now seen the subject of our memoirs involved in a contest with his brethren on points which, though not immediately affecting the vital truths of Christianity, have been too well proved of late years to be essentially connected with the peace and the interests of society, both civil and ecclesiastical. Following the course which we have proposed, of permitting him whose life we are recording, to act, as far as possible, the part of his own biographer, we now lay before our readers a few extracts from his correspondence with Mr. Bruce, which may give them some idea of the manner in which matters were managed in the General Synod, previous to the introduction of the New Testimony. The other points incidentally noticed, may, it is hoped, be found not uninteresting.

“*March 5, 1801.*—I do not know if I mentioned to you, that the paper of authorities which I read to

\* To the same.

you, was begun with some view of laying it in some way before the Synod. This was suggested to me by the manner in which the twelve brethren proceeded respecting the act of the General Assembly, condemning some parts of the Marrow. I thought that this might be a means of making some members of the Synod more cautious in proceeding to ratify the condemnation of the Confession of Faith. But when I began to consider how limited my reading had been on that subject, I was convinced I could not do justice to the cause, and had not a call to proceed in that way, at least by myself; and I resolved to ask your advice, whether any thing of a similar kind was incumbent on the friends of the Reformation, or whether they should decline any thing of the kind until the accusations against the compilers of the Confession and our reformers be substantiated by proofs.

"I would much wish that you would proceed, according as health and leisure will permit, with the works you mentioned, and have long designed." (He refers to a selection from the works of the reformers.) "They would certainly be a great acquisition to the reformed cause, and '*The Library*' is becoming daily more necessary from the neglect with which the reformed writers are treated. If I could encourage you by any assistance in this, my leisure time and my labour shall not be wanting. By your direction I might take a great part of the drudgery off your hands in abridging some works, where care and constancy might in some measure make up for the want of other qualifications. I might procure Zuinglius' works. I have some of the writings of another Swiss divine, Aretius, and could get all of them. You speak of confining yourself to the writers in the reformed churches. Would it not be proper to include Luther and Melancthon, who had such an eminent share in the Reformation?"

"I send you, according to promise, Haldane's Address, with an Anabaptist pamphlet on a part of the

same subject. The political opinions defended in them are gaining ground here among those that pretend to religion, and have a wonderful influence in prejudicing them against the Scotch Reformation."

"*February 9, 1802.*—You will receive with this a proof of the manuscript last sent. I was much gratified by the discipline you administered to that anecdote-monger, *Petit-Andrews*.\* I used the freedom of adding one to the number of opprobrious epithets you had selected, although the number was sufficiently great before. When yours came to hand, I had just finished the reading of him, not without indignation, and would as soon read the adventures of *Joseph Andrews* as be condemned to go through the same drudgery a second time. There is something in the modern study of the fine arts, belles lettres, and mere antiquities, that gives the mind a *littleness* which totally unfits it for being suitably affected with things truly great in characters eminent for love of religion, liberty and true learning. To demolish a Gothic arch, break a pane of painted glass, or deface a picture, are with them acts of ferocious sacrilege not to be atoned for, the perpetrators of which must be *ipso facto* excommunicated from all *civil* society, and reckoned henceforth among savages; while to preserve these magnificent trifles, for which they entertain a veneration little less idolatrous than their Popish or Pagan predecessors, they would consign whole nations and generations to—ignorance and perdition. Excuse the rhapsody, and pass with a smile this ebullition of my *new-caught* enthusiasm. I have sent you a paper containing remarks on the 23d chapter (of the Confession:) also, the Reasons of Dissent formerly read before the Synod."

"*May 1, 1802.*—On Thursday the Synod heard papers of Remonstrance from Messrs. Whytock and

\* This refers to the Continuation of Henry's History by Andrews, a violent calumniator of the Scottish reformers, and whose tirades and libels were severely rebuked by Mr. Bruce in his *Historico-Politico Dissertation*, p. 94-96.

Chalmers, and also Reasons of Protest, with answers to them by the committee, who had been at considerable pains. The answers were drawn up with great speciousness and severity, and being read to a partial audience, were warmly received. They did not deny the more general idea of vows, &c., but asserted that the Synod had not to do with it; they denied that charges were brought against our Covenants in the New Testimony—maintained that the Synod had not dropped nor meant to drop a testimony for attainments, and for this referred to the Acknowledgment of Sins, insisting that the Protesters had been premature, &c. In my opinion there was much sophistry and evasion in them, but calculated to impose upon people. After all, however, the Synod agreed only in this, that the Reasons of Protest were sufficiently answered by them, but that they were not to be understood as approving of every ‘mode of expression,’ which, in the modern language of the Synod, means every *sentiment*.”

“*May 13, 1802.*—I wrote you before what the Synod had done as to the New Testimony. They have resolved to employ almost the whole of their meeting in August about the Narrative and Introduction. I begin to believe now that they will introduce a testimony for the attainments of the Church of Scotland, &c., however inconsistent this be with what they have enacted. The leading men from the west, and the Doctor from the south, have adopted the idea, and others who expressed themselves decidedly against it will fall in for peace’ sake and the necessity of the times. At the same time, it will be so limited, that the friends to the former testimony will be unable to accede to it. I see more and more the justice of a remark of yours, that the corrections that we got inserted do little real good to the cause. The only use I see that they make of papers given in, is to make the changes less gross and apparent, while they still maintain their main ground. Yet I cannot see but it is our duty to use means of this kind.”

“*September 4, 1802.*—I have scarcely been able to be present at any of the sederunts of Synod, although I regret it the less as I cannot see that I could have reaped much benefit or done any good. The Synod have spent all this week upon the latter part of the narrative—to what purpose they themselves cannot say, nor have they ever determined. It is too evident they know not what they do, nor whether they are leading themselves or the people. The Western Committee, (now a little come to themselves,) instead of bringing up answers to the remaining papers against the enactments of the New Testimony, as their friends expected, have materially confessed that the act needs reconsideration and revisal. They have brought in an overture containing about seven or eight propositions respecting covenanting and the connexion between religious and civil matters, which they propose to be introduced as a *preamble* and an integral part of the Testimony as well as the Introduction. Along with many things exceptionable, they contain a declaration in favour of defensive war for religion and liberty, and of the magistrate’s restraining profane swearing, *blasphemy*, &c. It was merely read, and I suppose will be taken into consideration next week. This, though unexpected, and though it shows that these brethren have become more sensible of the difficulties with which they are surrounded, is still a very dark dispensation. There is danger of its dividing or being a stumbling-block to those who have been opposing the New Testimony, and it may tend greatly to mislead the body of professors. We have much need to look for Divine direction, and to take heed to our steps, lest the lame be turned out of the way. May the cloud which is dark on one side be for a light on the other to all the fearers of the Lord. Requesting your prayers, and wishing you Divine countenance in your important labours, I am, dear father, yours ever,

“THO. M'CRIE.”

The fear expressed in the concluding part of this



letter was far from being unfounded. The "new light principle," that seed which involved a radical departure from the profession formerly espoused by Seceders, on the question of the connexion between church and state, and which admitted of being expanded into the great tree of Voluntaryism, was, as we have seen, already planted in the profession of the General Synod. But these disavowals of its practical consequences, however inconsistent they were with that principle, served the purpose of hoodwinking a great number of the common people, who are rarely qualified to judge of an abstract principle, and of satisfying some good men, who were glad of an apology for compliance with the change which had been effected; while, at the same time, they furnished a handle against the protesters, which some were not slow to improve, by representing them as a set of impracticable zealots, who were standing out for theoretical trifles, and were charging the Synod with being actuated by motives, and aiming at objects, which they solemnly disclaimed.

Though well aware of the construction which would be put on their conduct, the protesters, availing themselves of every legal formality, continued to remonstrate against the introduction of the new terms of communion at every step. In September 1803, Messrs. Whytock, Aitken and M-Crie, tendered a formal protestation, which was afterwards adhered to by Messrs Bruce, Chalmers and Hogg, in which they say, "Though by no means averse to an adapting of our Testimony to the present times, and though approving of many things in these acts (of the Synod) suitable to this end, we find ourselves under the necessity of protesting against them—as containing, in our view, several things injurious to the reformation cause, as being a material departure from the original state of the Secession Testimony, and as altering the terms of our communion. We also hereby declare and protest, that in our continuing in communion with this Synod we are to be viewed as holding by

the Act, Declaration and Testimony, with the other parts of our profession and terms of communion as stated by the Associate Presbytery, and that our concurring in admitting persons to our communion, shall be, as formerly, in the way of receiving their adherence to the foresaid Testimony. Finally, we protest for liberty to exoner ourselves in all ways competent with respect to these acts and deeds now protested against, and particularly to remonstrate to this Synod at their next meeting."

"*February 22, 1804.*—Our brethren in the other congregation have resolved to break off the communion which we had together by the alternate dispensation of the Lord's Supper in the two congregations. They have also resolved in their session to have the sacrament four times a year, twice without fast-days. After their silent acquiescence in the observance of the royal fast,\* I expected nothing from them. A little prudent management will reconcile Seceders now-a-days almost to any novelty. I have always endeavoured to think and speak tenderly of the conduct of those individuals in the other congregation who have declined to hold communion with us, as I was not without suspicion that they had cause of offence in a number of things. But when I consider how they have acted with respect to other matters of present litigation, I cannot help thinking that their conduct is too like that of straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel. However, the above

\* "I hear that the day of the king's fast will be chosen by numbers of our congregations as a fast-day, either in place of the day appointed by the Synod, or before the sacrament, which many have fixed for that time. Our Session have agreed *not to observe that day.*" (To Mr. Bruce, 13th October, 1803.) Mr. M'Crie's objections to the observance of royal fasts were founded on the implied assumption of an Erastian power by the State to interfere *in matters purely spiritual*, and which belonged to the Church. The new light party, with all their horror at any connexion between Church and state, were not, it appears, so scrupulous in this matter.—James Sharpe, we know, who turned traitor and persecutor, swallowed the *tender*, acknowledging the authority of Cromwell; James Guthrie, who suffered for his faithfulness, refused it.

disagreeable incident as to the two congregations gives me little concern, except in as far as it is connected with matters of greater magnitude, the general state of religion in the body.”

Matters were now fast hastening to a crisis. In May 1804, the Synod at length enacted their Narrative and Testimony into a term of communion. By dint of ringing the changes on “persecution for conscience’ sake,” and at the same time disavowing all intention of relinquishing the ancient profession of Seceders, the great majority of the people were prepared for the change. Liberty was the idol of the day; and though there were not a few, both among the ministers and the people, who scrupled to fall down and worship it, yet these, feeble and irresolute in their opposition, were carried along, pushed aside, or trampled on, by the crowd which dragged along its triumphal car.\* The protesters alone stood firm,

\* The following is a specimen of the well-disposed but faint-hearted opposition to which reference is made. It is an extract from a letter to Mr. M’Crie from the Rev. Mr. Barlas, dated Crieff, 3d December, 1804. “R. D. B.,—I was favoured with yours of the 2nd of October, and am greatly obliged to you for being at so much pains to give me information concerning the views and proceedings of the remonstrating brethren. For some time I have been anxious to know how far the other brethren who object to the New Testimony and Narrative and I, are agreed in our sentiments about them, and it gives me much satisfaction to see by the remonstrance that our sentiments are nearly the same. There are several things in it objected to, which did not strike me when reading the Testimony and Narrative, such as covenanting being restricted to those who bear the character of Church members, and no certain sound being given concerning establishments of religion; but now upon considering the reasoning in the remonstrance on these points, it appears to me, that according to what the Synod have asserted, it is inconsistent for them any longer to acknowledge either the National Covenant, or the Solemn League and Covenant, and that *they must be viewed as disapproving of all religious establishments, the best as well as the worst.* In other things remonstrated against, I observe that though the brethren argue in another and more convincing manner than I was capable of, our views are the same. I am very much troubled about the intended ratification of the Testimony at next Synod by the new form of covenanting, but am at a loss to say if any step should be taken to disapprove of it. My increasing frailty and incapacity for acting, which in all

renewing their protest against the principle which remained unrelinquished, although "some of the most glaring and exceptionable passages were expunged or altered." The Synod, anxious, perhaps, to prevent a rupture which they had now rendered inevitable, granted them liberty to retain their peculiar views, and receive into their communion such as "might better understand and approve of the former statement of their principles;" but this favour was vouchsafed only on the conditions, that they should be bound to admit all who declared their preference for the New Testament—*that they "should not, either from the pulpit or the press, impugn or oppose our principles as stated by the Synod,"*—and that they "should conduct themselves, as they had done hitherto, in attending Church Courts, and assisting their brethren on sacramental occasions." With such conditions, as may be readily conceived, the protesters could not comply. The liberty of admitting members on the old principles was fairly neutralized by the necessity of admitting others on the principles which they condemned; and to submit to be tied up from testifying, "*either from the pulpit or the press,*" in favour of the profession which they had become bound to support at their ordination, was a course which neither conscience nor consistency could permit them to adopt. The toleration proposed was absurd in principle, and would have been found impracticable in administration. Had the dissentients yielded to such a measure, they would have consented to the withdrawal of all judicial authority from the principles which had been called in question, and bartered the very existence of the original profession for a mean and uncertain prolongation of their own existence in a mongrel fellowship. The events which the course of time has since evolved, leave no room to question, that in adopting a different line, they

probability will soon lay me aside from public work, make me frequently think that what is competent to me is, to adhere firmly to my former principles, and be only a silent observer."

consulted the honour of truth and followed the road of duty. When we consider the undue restraints which these conditions imposed on their ministerial liberty, it is difficult to see whercin "the lenity and forbearance of the Synod towards the protesting brethren," which has been so highly praised, manifested itself; unless we are to rank under these virtues, the fact of the Synod having permitted them hitherto to exercise, without censure, their constitutional privilege of protesting and remonstrating in the Church Courts, which had now become as superfluous as it had been unavailing. With the last condition, requiring their attendance on Church Courts and assisting their brethren at communions, the Synod had now rendered compliance equally impracticable. The protesters could do neither, without compromising the principles for which they had all along contended, and countenancing the enforcement of the acts against which they had protested.

The perplexities into which Mr. M'Crie and his brethren were thrown by these enactments, were manifold. They were greatly at a loss how to act with regard to their congregations. The people, in general, were totally unconscious of the change which had been effected on the Constitution of the Synod, or of the grounds on which it had been opposed. Nothing had as yet been published by the protesters on the subject; and with a feeling of delicacy, rarely exemplified, they had never introduced the litigated points into the pulpit. "As to pulpit declarations," says Mr. M'Crie, writing to Mr. Aitken, 9th March 1804, "I know of none that the brethren here (the professor excepted) have given. I have never *ex professo* introduced the subject. Few of the people about this place have any apprehension that things are wrong. I am sorry to see brethren, for many of whom I entertain a high respect, acting a part which I cannot but look upon as deceitful and inconsistent." "The more I think of the state of matters," he writes to Mr. Bruce, 12th June 1805, "I am the more fully

convinced that it is high time to give a public statement of the grounds of our opposition. If it be delayed much longer, it will come too late. The people will be gained over unto or fixed in the new sentiments, and some of those who have appeared against them will fall off. I believe that the great thing that the leaders in Synod now want is a respite to enable them fully to establish the new system. Mr. Turnbull (of Glasgow) wishes to know the judgment of brethren as to his publication. I should like much to see it; only could have wished that the brief statement of which you spoke had preceded it. You know Mr. T.'s peculiar mode of writing, which I am afraid would not be very intelligible in many things, nor palatable to many at present."

Another source of distress was the prospect of breaking up that kindly fellowship which had subsisted between him and his brethren in the ministry. It was long before he could prevail on himself to resign the pleasures of an intercourse which his conscience would no longer permit him to enjoy. He writes in March 1806, "As to our conduct in respect to communion here for some time back, I am not disposed altogether to vindicate it. I feel I am not in a right state, and am often uneasy, I mean in point of conscience; for in another point of view, as to alienation between brethren and me, this has not obtained to a very great degree." His trials in this respect were considerably aggravated by the death of his friend Mr. Whytock, who was suddenly "taken away from the evil to come," by a stroke of apoplexy on the 24th of October 1805. "This providence," he writes, "has been very afflicting to me, from the intercourse I had with him, and the impression which his friendly offices and counsels had made upon me. But "What shall I say? *He* himself hath done it." The Lord seems to be trying us by dark dispensations. He is diminishing our number (we thought it sufficiently small) to make us look to Himself, and cleave more closely to one another. O that this were the effect!"

This state of matters could not last long. "It is certainly of great consequence," he says, April 9, 1806, "that our minds be made up as to the step to be taken at the next meeting of Synod, which now approaches. The crisis seems to be come. We are certainly called upon decidedly to reject the new terms of communion, and to take up ground which will give us liberty to make such appearances in behalf of our principles, as the exigency may demand. Much depends upon our being directed to the proper step: never more need for looking to the Wonderful Counsellor." Accordingly, at the meeting of Synod in May 1806, the protesters, now reduced to four, viz. Messrs. Bruce, Aitken, Hogg and M'Crie, took a more decided step, and jointly presented a paper, in which they say, "That finding no longer access to continue judicial contendings with the Synod, nor any hopes left of their being allowed to retain their former profession entire, or of enjoying ministerial freedom in co-operation with the General Synod and inferior judicatories, as now constituted, according to the terms enacted and the restrictions attempted to be imposed on protesting ministers last year, they are constrained (though without any prospect of being able to maintain a successful opposition, in the present state of things, to the torrent that is carrying along the large body of Seceders throughout the land) once more to declare and protest, in their own name, and in the name of all who may still be disposed to adhere to their former profession and engagements, that they shall hold themselves free from any obligation to comply with these innovating acts; that they shall account every attempt by the Synod, or any in subjection to it, to compel them to conformity to the new system and constitution to be unwarrantable; that, in the present state of exclusion into which they have been driven by the prevailing party in Synod, (which they wish may be but temporary and short,) they shall be at liberty to maintain their former testimony and communion as formerly stated, with

ministers and people, as Providence may give them opportunity; and that in endeavouring to do this, they must consider themselves as possessing a full right to the exercise of ministerial or judicative powers, according as they may have a call, or may think it conducive to the ends of edification to use that right, and that notwithstanding of any censure or sentence the Synod may see meet to pass to the contrary, on account of the part they have been obliged to act in this cause.”\*

This paper, which was received by the Synod without any objections, placed the protesters in very peculiar circumstances. Their relation to the Synod, as constituted on the new deeds, was virtually dissolved; they considered themselves “secluded from all communion” with it, and consequently declined its jurisdiction, so long as it was thus constituted. Anxious to try every method to prevent a breach, they were still ready to yield all due subordination to the supreme court, according to their ordination vows. But considering that the Synod had left them standing on the original constitution of the Society, had adopted an entirely new system of principles, contrary to these vows, and, by engaging in the work of covenanting on the ground of these principles, had renounced their former profession with all the solemnity of an oath, the protesting brethren regarded themselves as no longer under the authority of the General Synod as thus constituted, and viewed themselves at liberty to act as if no such body existed.

The subsequent steps taken by the protesters will appear from the following correspondence:—

Mr. M'Crie to Mr. Bruce.

“*June 18, 1806.*—The immediate purpose of my writing you is to give you an account of matters in the congregation which appear to be coming to a crisis, and ask your advice. On a Sabbath afternoon,

\* Paper in Statement of the Difference, &c., p. 223—228.



about three weeks ago, I reckoned it necessary to give a public declaration respecting the grounds of our opposition to the late measures of the Synod, chiefly in the way of stating a few facts as to the difference between the former and present profession.\* At a meeting of Session after that, a very great desire was testified that the Session should declare their adherence to the Synod and to the New Testimony. The motion was delayed only with the view of being revived at next meeting, and there is no doubt of its carrying, as the most of the members of Session are determinedly of the Synod's sentiments. They have also been complaining that a meeting of the congregation has not been called, with the view of their declaring themselves. I have had no freedom to use any private means for counteracting these measures, nor to encourage any counter-petitions, although a goodly number of the congregation are attached to the original principles. The only thing I wish is, to know how I shall act when matters are come to a crisis. Will you be so good as to advise me on the following points?

“In what manner shall I conduct myself in the Session when they come to vote their adherence to the Synod and the New Testimony? I am satisfied that I cannot continue to hold session with them after such a declaration, adopting fully the new principles, after all I have been doing against them, and after I have been obliged to leave the Synod on account of their determined adherence to them. The only thing I am at a loss about is, how I should act before they put the vote.—Again, in what manner should I act if the majority of the congregation, at a congregational meeting which will soon be held, should declare that they adhere to the Synod, according to the late statement of their principles? Can I continue to dispense ordinances to them, or will it be incumbent on me to withdraw together with any

\* See Appendix.

that may be disposed to adhere to the cause of Christ, agreeably to our protestation? Would there be any propriety in my attending the congregational meeting, or letting them know, previously to such a vote, what I will reckon incumbent upon me?

“I am much obliged to you for your kind sympathy on this occasion. Through your prayers, with those of other brethren, and the supply of the Spirit of Christ, I trust I shall be upheld, and made in some measure faithful in the present contest. The breaking of the congregation was long a matter of bitter concern to me; but I have endeavoured to cast it wholly upon the Lord. Though ‘my bowels are often troubled within me,’ and my spirits dejected, I can yet say, ‘Perplexed, but not in despair; cast down, but not destroyed.’ ‘There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it.’”

In reply Mr. Bruce says, “it is with concern that I sit down to write an answer in the painful circumstances of the case, though they are such as might have been expected, sooner or later, as times go. My concern is excited more on account of the blinded people, than on your account; for I hope that you will find that there is a degree of heart-felt peace, not to be shaken by such events, in singly cleaving to the Lord, and suffering for righteousness’ sake. No doubt the thought of breaking the harmony of a congregation, otherwise united, and wearing so very promising an appearance, must have caused you great uneasiness; but those things which are unavoidable in the prosecution of the course of duty, we must be ready to bear with resignation. How to act in such a new and trying situation, requires greater grace and wisdom than any of us possess, and better counsel than any on earth can give. But may not this be one of those cases, in which you may expect, in some measure, a verification of the promise our Lord made

to his disciples, 'It shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak.' I humbly think that there is no reason for attempting to prevent either session or congregation from declaring themselves, in the most formal manner, on the public crisis that has arisen." He then proceeds to advise him on the most proper method of ascertaining the sentiments of the people.

To the Rev. Arch. Bruce,—*June 27, 1806.*

"R. D. F.,—I received your favour yesterday, and am much obliged to you for the full directions which it contains. I have to inform you that the Presbytery of Edinburgh met on Tuesday last, and agreed that you and I should be *cited* to attend their next meeting on the 22d of July. I have not yet received the citation, but hear that it proceeds on two grounds,—our not attending meetings of Presbytery, although in good health, and our having made declarations to our people in opposition to the principles exhibited by the Synod, and tending to produce schism in the body. I scarcely thought they would have been so fast, but suppose that their object is to get the affair fully before the Synod at Glasgow in August, by referring the cause, and summoning us to attend. I am pleased that they are taking these steps, as it shows what we may expect, and will sooner and most easily disentangle us from the various embarrassments. I will expect that you will write me, after receiving the citation, in what general terms an answer should be returned to it. Perhaps, as the Presbytery have taken up the business, our elders may not judge it necessary to prosecute it so fast as they proposed—not that I was averse, for my own part, to the early decision of the matter. I do not doubt that there will be still a competent number to support the standard in Edinburgh. As to the possession of the [meeting] house, I am not in the least anxious to retain it. I have even thought that perhaps Providence intended the dissolution of the congregational state, and our removal from the house, to set aside the stumbling which it has occasioned to some friends

of the cause not connected with the congregation. But I would wish to leave this entirely to another's management. Whatever may happen, I am fully satisfied of the propriety and necessity of the appearance we are making, and particularly of the step taken at last meeting [of Synod.] But I must have done, assuring you that I am, very dear father, ever yours, .

THO. M'CRIE."

To Mr. Aitken he writes:

"*July* 10, 1806. —The Professor and I have each received a citation in form to attend the Presbytery. I mean not to compear, as I cannot in consistency with the step lately taken, but intend to return some answer by letter. I suppose the design of this measure is to get us regularly cited to the August Synod."

"When it is determined to sacrifice the victim," says the old proverb, "it is not difficult to find a stick in the forest to despatch it with." And when a church is bent on introducing a change into its profession, it will go hard if they do not find something in the conduct of the protesting minority which shall afford a plausible pretext for condemning them, and resting their condemnation, not on the cause in dispute, but on some informalities or disorderly tactics in their mode of prosecuting it. This was remarkably exemplified in the present case. The real point in dispute was unquestionably the New Testimony, which the protesting brethren had declared to be, in their judgment and conscience, inconsistent with Scripture, with the original principles of the Reformation and Secession, and with their own ordination vows. These protests and representations had been tabled for many years before the Synod, without incurring any censure; but no sooner do the protesters begin to act upon them, and to explain to *their people* the ground on which they stood, than they are charged with following schismatical and divisive courses. The prevailing party in the Synod first

expel them from their communion, by imposing a new set of terms to which they could not conscientiously submit; and then, summoning them to their bar, they proceed against them as contumacious offenders. The truth is, the protesters had been placed, by the enactment of the new deeds, in such circumstances, that it was impossible for them to act a conscientious part, without exposing themselves to what amounted, in the eyes of the Synod, to the charge of schism; and they were soon driven, by the necessity of following out their protest, to adopt steps which furnished a pretext for passing against them the highest censures which can be inflicted on ministers of the Gospel.

On the 28th August 1806, while the General Synod was sitting in Glasgow, Messrs. Bruce, Aitken, Hogg, and M'Crie, "being in Providence convened together at Whitburn," on a sacramental occasion, and taking into serious consideration the circumstances in which they were placed, after some time spent in solemn prayer for divine direction, constituted themselves into a Presbytery. Before they met on this occasion, none of them had contemplated such a step. I find Mr. Aitken recommending a meeting after the first Sabbath of September, which he thinks "would answer better, as they would know by that time what the Synod had done, and could take what steps would be necessary."\* But on consulting together, they saw no good reason for delay. The expediency of such a step at the time chosen for it, may, perhaps, be doubted even by those who consider that they were perfectly entitled, in point of principle, to adopt it. And there can be no doubt that the circumstance of their having constituted themselves into a separate court, while the Synod was sitting, hastened the ecclesiastical censures which were passed against them, and furnished a plausible plea in the legal proceedings

\* "The truth is, not one of the constituent members knew in the morning when he arose, whether such an event was to take place that day, or at that time, but the probability seemed rather to be on the other side."—Bruce's *Review of the Proceedings of Synod*, p. 72.

which ensued. These consequences, however, the protesters were determined, should not prevent them from discharging their duty. Despairing of any prospect of return on the part of the Synod to their original ground, regretting the time which they had already lost in fruitless negotiations with the courts, and persuaded that the season had come for making a public appearance in behalf of the principles of the Secession; they embraced the opportunity of having met together, which, owing to their distance from each other, they seldom enjoyed, to avail themselves of the right, which they had formally claimed, of associating together in a judicial capacity.

In their Deed of Constitution, they declare, that “finding themselves virtually secluded from ministerial and Christian communion, while they could not, with a good conscience, and consistently with the vows which they were presently under, comply with the new terms, nor concur with their brethren in carrying them into execution, or in administrations wherein an approbation of them is necessarily implied; and at the same time, having protested in their own name, and in the name of all who should adhere to them, that, in this state of seclusion and separation to which they were reluctantly driven, it should be warrantable for them to maintain communion with such ministers and people as might still be disposed to adhere to their former profession, on the terms settled in the Associate Body from the beginning; and that they should have a right, as they might have a call to exercise all the parts of their ministerial office, individually, or in a judicative capacity, in support of their common profession, without any regard to these innovating acts; and that they should not be responsible to the Synod, or inferior judicatories, as presently constituted and acting according to these deeds, but would hold any censures as null and void that might be pronounced against them by these judicatories, for their conduct in this matter, while acting according to Presby-

terian principles and their ordination vows, &c., it was unanimously agreed and resolved, *That as they had a right, and appeared to have a call, they should presently proceed to constitute.*”\* The Presbytery, thus constituted, afterwards assumed the name of the *Constitutional Associate Presbytery*.

Meanwhile the Synod, unconscious of what was passing at Whitburn, had, on the 28th of August, the very day on which the Presbytery was constituted, deposed Mr. Aitken, on the alleged ground of his having followed a “disorderly and schismatical course.” Mr. Aitken had rendered himself particularly obnoxious to the leading members of Synod, by having taken a more active part than the rest of his brethren in opposing the new measures, and his crime was considered as aggravated by his receiving into communion persons belonging to other congregations, upon the old terms, which he conceived he was warranted to do by the protest so often alluded to. The eases of Messrs. Bruce and M’Crie were then taken up, and it was at first agreed that they should be deferred until next meeting of Synod. But an incident occurred which speedily altered this determination.

Though the protesters had publicly disclaimed connexion with the Synod as it was now constituted, and consequently held all the censures it might pass on them null and void, yet, aware of the use which might be made of the fact of their having constituted at Whitburn, and unwilling to afford their opponents farther ground for disturbing the peace of their congregations, and proceeding to those extremities to which they appeared already too much in-

\* The Deed by which the Protesting ministers constituted themselves into a presbytery, with the Reasons,” is appended to the *Statement*. At a subsequent meeting, in November 1806, “they think it not improper to join the term *Constitutional* with that of *Associate*; as this also may serve to express their adherence to the true Constitution of the Reformed Church of Scotland, as stated in her Standards and Reformation Acts, and to the original Constitution of the Associate Presbytery and Synod.”

clined, they did not consider it prudent to make a public announcement of their meeting, till they could publish the reasons which had led them to adopt that step. But as they did not affect any secrecy in the transaction, one of them informed a friend, in passing through Edinburgh, of what had been done; and by this means, the intelligence reached Glasgow while the Synod was still sitting. Orders were immediately transmitted to ascertain the fact, and on Sabbath following, Mr. M'Crie, in reply to a question put by some of his elders, frankly informed them of the truth.\*

Upon this a deputation of them was immediately despatched to Glasgow with the alarming intelligence. On obtaining this piece of information, the Synod, filled with indignation at what they regarded as an overt act of rebellion, instantly resumed the case of Mr. M'Crie, and on the faith of this vague representation, without the formalities of a legal process, on Tuesday the 2d of September, they passed on him the sentence of deposition and excommunication.†

\* "As a minister" (says Mr. Bruce) "is not subjected to the judgment of a Session, in the execution of his ministerial office, their expiscating inquiries, with an evident design to criminate, might justly have been evaded, or repelled as premature and impertinent: but the candour of their minister, and the conscious sense of duty in the transaction referred to, which neither he nor any of his brethren surely ever meant to keep a secret, or were ashamed to declare, when they had a proper call to do so, kept him from using his privilege in all its extent. It is in a high degree ridiculous to suppose that any possessed of common sense would ever proceed to constitute a Presbytery with a view to keep it secret. Though they did not reckon it proper to promulgate the fact, till the minute, with reasons, was drawn out, yet they mentioned it to any to whom they had occasion to speak on the general subject, and it is false that they ever laid the slightest injunction, or insinuated the slightest advice, to keep it secret." —Bruce's *Review*, p. 70-72.

† "With respect to Mr. M'Crie, without more ado now found guilty, to use the emphatic language of the letter-writer," (an anonymous writer in the *Christian Magazine*, who had given a very garbled account of the affair,) "*forbearance* could no longer be *tolerated*." Even a Synodical vote of delay, or of longer forbearance, now became intolerable, and must be brushed away



The following is the tenor of the sentence, being the same in substance as that pronounced on the rest:—"Glasgow, September 2, 1806.—The General Associate Synod read a paper from the second congregation of Edinburgh, bearing that Mr. M'Crie, minister of that congregation, acknowledged to his Session, that he and his protesting brethren had formed themselves into a Presbytery, distinct and separate from the Synod. Which said fact being attested by the subscription of several elders, after mature deliberation, and considering what is contained in the minutes of this Synod in the case of Mr. M'Crie on the 29th ult., and the Synod also finding by his acknowledgment before his Session, as is attested by six of the members of it, that he and his protesting brethren had formed themselves into a Presbytery distinct and separate from the Synod: It was moved that the Synod either Depose or Suspend him. The vote was therefore stated, Depose or Suspend. The roll being called, and votes marked, it carried Depose. Therefore, the Synod did, and hereby do, in the name and by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, the alone King and Head of his Church, **DEPOSE** the said Thomas M'Crie from the office of the holy ministry, prohibiting him from all and any exercise of said ministry henceforth in the Church. And in the same name, and by the same authority, they did, and hereby do, suspend him from all communion with the Church in sealing ordinances, aye and until he shall give satisfying evidences of his repentance."

The surprise and confusion into which Mr. M'Crie's

as a cobweb. Censure—censure, is now the order of the day, since the tocsin of Edinburgh has sounded the alarm. And that the Synod might not be troubled with tedious formalities, citation of parties, precognitions, examination of witnesses, proofs of relevancy; or be detained for months or years perhaps, by creeping through the different stages, they make short work of it, and, all at once, within a few hours, leap to the highest degree of censure that can be inflicted on a minister as such."—Bruce's *Review*, p. 69.

congregation was thrown on hearing of this sentence, may be easily conceived. As soon as the news reached town, numbers of them, without any previous concert, hastened to the house of their minister, to ascertain the truth, and express their sympathy with him under the trying circumstances. They found him composed and resigned. "I certainly looked for being suspended," said he, pacing through the room, which was now nearly filled,—“I hardly expected they would have proceeded this length. *But,*” he added, with the emphatic solemnity which marked his manner when much affected, “what am I, that I should be counted worthy to suffer shame for His name!”

When the ties that bind a conscientious people together are snapt asunder, the revulsion is generally violent in proportion to the strictness with which they had been united. Mr. M'Crie's congregation being nearly equally divided, the first object of contest was the possession of the meeting-house. An attempt was made by the party opposed to the minister, on the week preceding his deposition, to obtain possession of the keys, which, however, on application being made to the Sheriff, were restored. On the following week, this party refused to submit to the decision of the Sheriff, and procured a suspension from the Lord Ordinary. Mr. M'Crie's friends, however, having made a representation of their case, his Lordship (Woodhouselee) granted on Friday an Interlocutor, ordering that Mr. M'Crie, on the ground of his deposition by the Synod, should preach only in the forenoon, and the other party's minister in the afternoon, till the question as to the property should be decided.\* This arrangement accordingly took

\* “This temporary arrangement,” says Mr. M'Crie, “was produced by a shameful bill of suspension, which was given in on Friday, without our lawyer having a previous opportunity of seeing it. This stated that I had for some time past shown a tendency to follow schismatical practices; that though the Synod had enjoined me a year ago to refrain from them, and not disturb the peace of the Church by my doctrine, I had persevered

effect, and on the afternoon of the Sabbath following (Sept. 7th) the sentence of Mr. M'Crie's deposition was intimated from his own pulpit, by Mr. Hay of Alyth, the minister appointed by the Synod for that service.

The following extracts may give some idea of the state of Mr. M'Crie's feelings during this trying period.

"*August 30, 1806, [Saturday.]*—During the greater part of this forenoon, I was troubled with anxiety, lest the Synod should not issue the business: it was only an hour before Mr. T. came that I had reconciled my mind to what *might be* the event."\*

"*August 31.*—It is said that "the priests in the temple profaned the Sabbath and were blameless." Will not this be an excuse for me writing you on Sabbath evening? I am anxious you should know the state of matters which have assumed an aspect which perhaps you did not expect." After speaking of the steps already mentioned, he adds, "But the Lord can overrule all. I do not repent the step I took at Whitburn. To have continued till next Synod in the situation in which we were, was impracticable. This has been the most trying day I have had. It was eleven o'clock last night before I heard of what the Sheriff had done."† To Professor Bruce he writes, Wednesday, *Sept. 3.*—"Our friends still think they may have the majority. I am happy that a competent number appear to support the stand in this place."—"Thursday, *September 4.*—To-day I have to inform you, that on Tuesday evening I was deposed by the Synod, upon the report of the

and drawn aside a number of the congregation to my schismatical doctrines, had constituted, &c., on account of which I had been deposed by my lawful superiors unto whom I had promised subjection, (a copy of the sentence of deposition was forwarded by the Synod Clerk, and given in to the civil court two days before I got my extract;) and as I had evinced a disposition to continue to preach, they prayed that his Lordship would find that I was no longer their lawful pastor, and interdict me from preaching in the house, or disturbing Mr. Hay, or any other minister the Synod might send."—To Professor Bruce, *Sept. 8, 1806.*

\* To Mr. Aitken.

† To Mr. Thomas Grieve.

elders that I had acknowledged our having constituted into presbytery. I need not say I require your sympathy and prayers."

"It seems," says Mr. Bruce in reply, "a ruling party in the Synod are resolved to go through with this business; and the Lord is permitting them for his own holy ends. He is righteous in all he sends or may send on us, though men be unjust. You and our brother (Mr. Aitken) have had the honour conferred on you of being foremost in enduring suffering in this manner for Christ's testimony in Scotland in the present contest. Others, if they live a little longer, will soon be joined with you in this; which we have reason to take joyfully. We have often spoken of the afflictions that come for the Gospel, and even may have been, especially of late, looking forward to something of this kind as awaiting us; and we need not think it strange, nor shrink from them, when they come. The loud report of their violence, like an alarm gun, is needful to awaken the people from their state of torpor, and even that will hardly convince them that there is any danger at hand."

#### Mr. M'Crie to Professor Bruce.

EDINBURGH, 8th Sept. 1806.

"REV. AND DEAR FATHER,—I received your expected and welcome letter, on Saturday evening, which greatly refreshed me. Before its arrival the Lord Ordinary (Lord Woodhouselee) had passed an Interlocutor, making a temporary arrangement as to the meeting-house, until the right of property should be determined. His decision was that I should have the house in the forenoon, and the other party might introduce their minister in the afternoon. Mr. Goold, the Cameronian minister, called on Thursday and told me that the managers of their house, having heard that I was to be excluded from my own pulpit, had unanimously agreed that I should be welcome to theirs on Sabbath first, as they were to be vacant.

I accordingly accepted it, and preached there in the afternoon and evening. In the forenoon I lectured on Psalm xliv. 17-21;\* in the afternoon preached on Isaiah liv. 10;† and in the evening on Acts xxviii. 20.‡ We were well attended all the day; in the forenoon a great number of strangers were collected by the report of the uncommon business. I have reason of thankfulness that I was carried through. In the morning when I went into the pulpit, I could not help my nerves and feelings being affected, but I suppose it was scarcely visible; it soon went off, and throughout the day I enjoyed great composure. During the afternoon, I could not help noticing, on reflection, that the thought of what was going on in our usual place of worship, did not *once* intrude on my mind, whatever impression I had of the general situation in which I was placed.—The affection and sympathy of my people who have remained steady, has been very tender; and I have the satisfaction of reflecting that they have *all* voluntarily come forward, without any private solicitations of mine, and good reason to think, as to the great body of them, that they act from knowledge and attachment to the cause, and not from mere attachment to me. This is a *muris alienus*§ against the false and illiberal charges brought against me of intriguing and drawing away the people in public and *private*, which, I understand, the Synod admitted into their minutes,

\* “All this is come on us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant. Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way; though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death. If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god, shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.”

† “For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.”

‡ “For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.”

§ “A brasen wall.”—Jer. xv. 20.

under the name of reasons of dissent against the deed of the first week; which the accusers did not venture to bring forth before the vote; and which constituted no part of the public charge or evidence."

Before dismissing the congregation on the forenoon of this memorable Sabbath, Mr. M'Crie considered it necessary to enter a formal protest against the sentence which had passed against him, that their withdrawing to another place of worship, in compliance with the decision of the civil court, might not be construed into "an approbation of, or acquiescence in, the work that was to go on." The following extracts from the address he delivered on this occasion may be interesting, as showing the grounds on which he refused submission to the Synodical censure.

"Brethren, it is necessary before dismissing you, to say a few things relative to the peculiar circumstances in which we are at present placed. You may have heard by report that the General Synod have last week passed a sentence by which they pretend to depose me from the office of the ministry, and to dissolve the connexion between me and this congregation. The determinations of church courts, although they are to be submitted to when agreeable to the Word, are only to be received so far as they speak according to the divine law and testimony. Their power is for edification, not destruction. They can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. They may command and straitly threaten not to speak at all in the name of Jesus: but whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto them more than unto God, judge ye.

"I consider this sentence as having been passed upon me for the appearances which I have made in behalf of the covenanted principles of the Church of Scotland, and the original Secession Testimony, of which I professed an unlimited approbation at my ordination, when I was bound to contend against all the errors which were opposite to it. Had the cen-

sure been inflicted upon me on personal grounds, on account of immoral conduct, or preaching doctrines opposite to the common profession, I would have seen it my duty to acquiesce, even although I had been convinced that injustice was done me. But there is a wide difference between a personal and a public cause: and it is allowed on all hands that this is a cause entirely public. The duty that I owe to truth, to solemn engagements, to the Church of God, and that part of it with which I am more particularly concerned, demand that I should declare that I hold this sentence as not only rash and harsh, but as unconstitutional, unjust, and totally invalid.

“So far as the sentence respects me, the instances of precipitancy and harshness affect me little. I thank God I have been enabled to bear them without irritation, and can forgive those who from ignorance or prejudice have been active in it, and would request you, my friends, to do the same. But I cannot but be affected with it in another point of view, as it relates to the public cause of religion and reformation in this land. That the Synod should not only have been left to depart from some important parts of the Reformation Testimony, but to direct the heaviest censures against those who are endeavouring, amidst great discouragements, to maintain it, is truly affecting.

“I do, therefore, now solemnly protest that my office, and the right to exercise it, remains unaffected by this sentence of pretended deposition passed by the Synod; that the relation between me and this congregation remains inviolate and unbroken, as I have not acted contrary unto, but am endeavouring to maintain the principles of, that Testimony according to which all administrations have uniformly proceeded in this congregation from the beginning; and that those who shall take upon them to exercise those ministrations in this place, which rightfully belong to me, are chargeable with intruding into my charge.”

We shall only add another extract on this disagreeable subject. Writing to his fellow-sufferer in the cause, Mr. Aitken, Sept. 17, 1806, he observes, "This sentence inflicted on you soon fell upon me also, and I desire to rejoice with you in it, as well as in any trials to which we may be subjected in consequence of it. "The spoiling of our goods," we and the people adhering to us should be prepared for, as far as "those that have cast out our names as evil" have it in their power. The pretended deposition, though precipitate and harsh, I was not unprepared for; it gave no pain to my conscience, and little or none to my feelings. I have reason to feel more for them than myself. I can see the hand of Providence in ridding me from a number of disagreeable circumstances to which I would have been subjected, had they either referred the matter to the presbytery, or rested at first hand in suspension.—Mrs. M'Crie has stood this trial better than I expected."

Any lengthened comments of mine upon these proceedings would be superfluous. Indeed, had I followed the line of conduct pursued by the subject of these memoirs, I would have suppressed even the details already given; for after this period, neither in public nor in private, in his pulpit discourses or published writings, did he ever make the slightest allusion to the treatment he had received from the Synod, either in the way of complaint, or by taking advantage of it against them. But as the facts required to be stated, the paramount claims of historical truth seem to demand that they should be stated fully. And now that "time's effacing fingers" have obliterated every vestige of the personal animosity excited by the conflict—now that the grave has closed over all the sufferers and most of the actors in the scenes we have been describing, no motives of delicacy can any longer interfere to prevent their disclosure.

On the conduct of the Synod, it is not an in-



viting task to make any reflections. Many of its members, it is hoped, lived to be ashamed of having dealt so harshly with men whose only crime, when their case is viewed apart from all its technicalities, was their steadfast adherence to the original principles of the Synod and their own ordination vows. It would be invidious to charge the Synod with personal hostility to the members of the Constitutional Presbytery. But when we consider that these men were occupying the very ground which the Synod had once occupied and had now deserted—that the character and constitution of that body had been really changed—and that there was a moral necessity urging the protesters to the stand they made, while no honourable evasion was left them;—it is impossible not to regard the censures that were passed on them as in the highest degree harsh and unjust, or to vindicate those who urged them with so much violence and precipitation from the charge of being influenced, in no small measure, by passion and party feeling. The nullity of sentences pronounced on such grounds, in the case of the protesters, it would be idle to demonstrate. Nothing, indeed, now seems more extraordinary, than that it should ever have appeared in the light of “doing God service,” to depose from the sacred ministry, and expel from the communion of the church, these faithful servants of Jesus Christ, whose only crime was, that they could not, in obedience and conformity to the Synod, abandon the profession to which they had sworn adherence, and violate the solemn vows they had taken at ordination.

There is one feature in the case which must have struck every candid reader, namely, the purely disinterested and conscientious character of the appearance made by Dr. M'Cric and his friends at this time for the cause of the Reformation. It must have been apparent to all who have examined, however slightly, the controversy as managed by them, that it involved the grand principles upon which

National Establishments of religion have been defended by their more enlightened advocates in the present day. And yet, at the time of which we speak, neither of the great parties whom this question has now brought into such violent collision, were aware of the tendency or importance of the controversy. The ministers of the National Church, not feeling themselves directly implicated in the dispute, seem to have totally disregarded it, as a mere party question of no real moment. The public at large, to whom it had not yet been submitted as a practical question took no interest in the subject. Even the lawyers, and judges of the land, at that time sufficiently alive to every thing like political innovation, when the matter was brought before them and subjected to their deliberate review, failed to perceive the native consequences of the principles adopted by the Synod. Press, pulpit and platform were silent; and the battle of the Establishment was fought by a few Seceding ministers, who never expected to share in its emoluments, and who, as the only earthly recompense of their fidelity, saw themselves deposed and excommunicated by their brethren, deserted by many of their people, branded as schismatics, and ultimately thrust out, under the sanction of law, from the churches in which they had officiated.

Though the question of Civil Establishments was not then agitated as a practical one, yet, as the principle was decidedly involved, so Dr. M'Crie clearly foresaw, even at this early period, that it would issue in the manner it has done. "The principles for which we have been called to contend," he said in an address to his flock shortly before his deposition, "may appear to many disputable or trivial matters. They do not appear so to us: we view them as involving the glory of God, the honour of Him whom his Father has placed on his holy hill, the advancement of his public interest on earth, and the welfare of nations. We look upon religion as the common concern of all mankind, and that it is the duty of persons

to promote and advance it in every station which they occupy. We consider that it is eminently the duty of those who are invested with civil authority to exercise a care about religion, and to make laws for countenancing its institution. We are persuaded that if the principles now adopted by Seceders had been acted upon in former times in this country, the Reformation could never have taken place; and that *Satan, after having found his former scheme of persecuting religion can no longer succeed, is now endeavouring to persuade men, that civil government and rulers have nothing to do with religion and the kingdom of Christ.*"

In the same Address, he speaks with equal confidence of the revival, in some future day, of the principles for which he contended, and utters an almost prophetic anticipation of the struggle in which the Church of Scotland is now engaged:—"Is it any wonder that there should be Seceders who cannot submit to receive such doctrine? The time will come, when it will be a matter of astonishment that so few have appeared in such a cause, and that those who have appeared should be borne down, opposed and spoken against. And low as the credit of the principles for which we contend is now sunk in the body, and few as are now disposed to appear for them, I entertain not the smallest doubt but that their credit will yet be revived, not only in the Secession, but in a more general way. When the time to favour Zion is come, what have been esteemed her small and despised things, will appear great things, and the stones which her sons will gather out of her rubbish will appear precious stones." \*

His private sentiments were not less decided. Nothing could be farther from the truth, than the charge of his having privately attempted to gain over others to his opinions. On the contrary, it is well known that he carried his reserve on this point so far as to give serious offence to many who applied for his advice, by sending them away with a dry admo-

\* Delivered in June 1806. See Appendix.

tion to examine the subject for themselves. This was invariably his practice through life, in those cases where he perceived that the application proceeded rather from culpable inattention to the means of information which lay open to all, than from real inability to form a judgment on the question. But when in the company of those whose views coincided with his own, he was more frank in expressing his mind. On one occasion about this time, it is remembered by a friend that he enlarged on the probable results of the new-light principles, as they were then termed, and declared his conviction that they would soon shake the whole country, and subvert all its religious institutions. "O Sir," said one of the company, "we will surely never live to see that day." "I don't know that," he replied; "I feel persuaded that you will see the fruits of these principles in a *quarter of a century*."

In consequence of the attempt made to deprive him of his meeting-house, Mr. M'Crie was now involved in all the toil and trouble of a prolonged litigation before the civil courts; and as the question involved the points of controversy with the Synod, which it was no easy task to get the gentlemen of the long robe to comprehend,\* he found himself under the necessity of composing the greater part of the law papers himself. It is needless to enter into the history of this process, which, as usual, became more and more involved the longer it continued in court. The Synod party claimed the property on the ground that it was erected for a congregation in connexion with the General Associate Synod; they pleaded that Mr. M'Crie being, in consequence of his deposition for schismatical practices, no longer a

\* "I recollect (though the story is now twenty years old) in a process before a Civil Court for my former place of worship, (which was lost,) when I was attempting to beat into the head of counsel the true state of the question which had been before the Ecclesiastical Courts, 'What!' he exclaimed, 'how can you be a friend to Establishments, when you are not a member of an Established Church!'—Dr. M'Crie to Dr. Watson, Feb. 6, 1832.

minister of that body, neither he nor his adherents had any right to retain possession of the house; and they prayed the civil court to sanction the sentence of the Synod. The conduct of Mr. M'Crie in objecting to the formula, is, of course, eagerly laid hold of to prejudice his cause, by representing him as "most unreasonably complaining upon the Synod for doing that which he declared it was necessary to do, before he could conscientiously submit to ordination." And the constitution of the separate Presbytery at Whitburn (the apparent informality of which it was much easier for their Lordships to understand, than to judge of the validity of the spiritual grounds on which it was vindicated) was considered as sufficient to decide the whole case.\* Mr. M'Crie's party, on the other hand, contended that the disposal of the property, according to the original deeds, was intrusted not to the Synod, but to the seat-holders, of whom they claimed a majority; that the body calling themselves the General Associate Synod was a new and different society from that with which Mr. M'Crie was originally connected, settled upon a new and different constitution, and that to this society, so constituted, he never promised nor owed any subjection; that the Synod had abandoned the principles to which he had become bound at his ordination; that not being a corporate body, or recognised in law, the civil court could not recognise or legally give their sanction to its sentences; and that the opposite opinion would involve the extraordinary consequence that the substantial right, or, at least, the disposal of the property of the meeting-houses in their communion, would remain with the ecclesiastical courts, though acquired at the sole expense of the congregation.†

\* Petition of John M'Intyre, &c., Nov. 11, 1806. Information for John M'Intyre and others against George Caw and others, May 12, 1807. Answers for John M'Intyre and others, Feb. 5, 1807.

† The Petition of the Rev. Thomas M'Crie, &c., unto the Right

The cause was protracted in the Court of Session till March 1809, when, by a majority of their Lordships, it was decided *against* Mr. M'Crie, and was carried by appeal to the House of Lords. Ultimately, however, the parties came to an agreement, according to which, Mr. M'Crie's people, on receiving a sum of money from the opposite party, gave up their rights to the litigated property. Subsequently, in 1810, they assembled in an obscure chapel at the foot of Carrubber's Close, till May 2d, 1813, when they entered a new place of worship which they had erected in West Richmond Street, and in which Dr. M'Crie continued to officiate to the close of his life.

While engaged in these litigations, he undertook, at the request of his brethren, to publish a paper explanatory of the principles involved in the controversy which had occasioned the breach; and the work appeared in April 1807, under the title of "Statement of the Difference between the Profession of the Reformed Church of Scotland, as adopted by Seceders, and the Profession contained in the New Testament and other Acts lately adopted by the General Associate Synod, particularly on the power of Civil magistrates respecting Religion, National Reformation, National Churches, and National Covenants." The "Statement" was at first intended to be the joint production of the Constitutional Presbytery; Mr. M'Crie's brethren, however, placed so much confidence in him, that they left it to himself; and with the exception of the chapter on Liberty of Conscience, in which he had the aid of the "jottings" of Mr. Bruce, and which labours under an obscurity arising from an attempt to compress a complex question into too small space, it was entirely his own composition. "After casting about," he says to one of them, "I was induced at last to put my name into the title, lest they should say nobody was responsible. All

Honourable the Lords of Council and Session, 18th Nov. 1806.  
Information for the Rev. Thomas M'Crie and others, against John M'Intyre and others, May 12, 1807.

that we can do, is to give such a statement as may serve to furnish information of the state of matters to those who wish to receive it. The exposure of the sophistications and misrepresentations of the other side, must be left to a separate and subsequent work." The strain of the pamphlet is, therefore, calm and argumentative; and, with slight exceptions, it is as applicable to the present state of matters, as it was to those at the time when it was published. The early history of this volume furnishes a striking instance of the truth, that excitement in the public mind is necessary to ensure a perusal for any production, however ably written. It fell almost dead from the press; but under the agitation of the Voluntary question, it came into such request, that a ransom was offered for a single copy, till a new edition could be procured, containing that part which referred to the connexion between church and state; and it now remains, not only a satisfactory exposition of the cause of the Constitutional Presbytery, but a full and Scriptural defence of the great principle of the duty of nations, as intimately affecting all their interests, civil and religious.

The controversy, as managed by the Constitutional Presbytery, and in the "Statement" by Dr. M'Crie, differed in several important points from the mode in which the modern Voluntary question, to which it bore a great resemblance in some of its leading features, has been generally conducted. The question of endowment—which is now considered the most essential part of the whole, so much so that some have gone so far as to maintain that, were it wanting, the controversy would be at an end—this truly paltry and secularizing element entered almost as little into the dispute at the time of which we write, as it did into the motives of the disputants. If introduced at all, it was regarded merely in the light of a corollary from the grand principle in debate, namely, the power and duty of the civil magistrate, as such, in reference to religion. This principle de-

rived its main interest, in the eyes of the protesters, from its bearings on the history of the Reformation from Popery and Prelacy in Britain; and it went to decide questions infinitely more important than any connected with pecuniary arrangements, such as,—How far were our ancestors right in legalizing the profession of the true religion?—in passing laws in its favour?—in protecting the Sabbath, and repressing gross violations of the first table of the law? Are they to be justified or condemned for having combined civil and religious matters in those solemn covenants by which the Reformation, at both its periods, was confirmed?—and how far, consequently, has the nation, as well as the church, become bound by these engagements? In short, ought religion to be recognised in the education of youth, in the administration of oaths, and in admission to places of power and trust in the country? Again, while they declared themselves in favour of civil establishments of religion, the Constitutional Presbytery were careful to guard against being supposed to approve of the existing establishments, which they considered as, in various respects, faulty and defective; disapproving, in particular, of the Revolution-settlement of the Church of Scotland, as having been effected in the way of overlooking all the attainments of the Second Reformation. Their declaration of adherence, therefore, to the constitution of the church of Scotland, was always coupled with the explanation, “as stated in her standards and acts of reformation.” But the most important point of difference between the contendings of these brethren, and those of the modern advocates of establishments, is to be found in the importance which they attached to the Covenants, as national deeds, binding upon posterity. Little as this point may be now understood, and much as it may be questioned, it goes deeper into the argument for establishments than many are aware of. The first shape in which voluntarism reared its head, was in that of an attempt to spiritualize these deeds, and under the plea



of simplifying the profession of Seceders, to separate them from the civil transactions with which they were connected. And to say no more at present, I venture to affirm, that no argument can be held valid against the national obligation of our Covenants, which will not strike, with equally fatal effect, against national religion.

Painful as it is to dwell upon the history of the censures which were inflicted on the other protesting ministers, it would be unpardonable to avoid noticing what befell these worthy men, with whom, during a large portion of his life, Dr. M'Crie was so intimately associated in fortune and affection. If the protesters were irregular in managing their cause with the Synod, that body seemed resolved to outstrip them in the irregularity of their proceedings against them. Instances of this it would be too tedious to mention. The most remarkable feature in the whole history is, the readiness with which, on every occasion, they availed themselves of the aid of the secular arm, to enforce the judgments of the Ecclesiastical Courts. With all their professed horror of confounding things sacred and civil—with all their theoretical jealousy of admitting the use of force, in any form, where religion was concerned, they showed no reluctance to appeal to carnal weapons, when the object was to banish from their pulpits, meeting-houses and manses, those ministers whom they had deposed—and deposed, be it remembered, substantially because they could not swallow a Testimony which denied to the magistrate any concern whatever with the church or with religion. The expulsion of the deposed ministers was sought from the civil power expressly on the ground of the ecclesiastical censure;\* interdicts sheriff-

\* " With these views, a bill of suspension and interdict was presented in name of Archibald Glen, James Pillans, Thomas Turnbull, and others, members of the said congregation, or connected therewith, wherein the suspenders, *founding on the sentence of deposition*, obtained against Mr. M'Crie in the Synod, and without condescending even to take any notice of the undoubted civil right which the informants, as trustees, and as re-

officers, legal prosecutions, and even military force, were called into action, to carry into effect the sentences pronounced by these foes to the magistrate's power *circa sacra*; and those who had denied to king and parliament the right of judging, for the state, between true and false religion, now committed to sheriffs and Lords Ordinary the delicate task of deciding, for the church, whether the Narrative and Testimony was a material departure from the principles of the Secession, and how far the change in the constitution of the General Associate Synod affected the validity of the censures pronounced by them. Lords and lawyers, accustomed only to sharpen their wits on the dry pandects and practicks of the bar, were unexpectedly called upon to pass sentence on

presenting a majority of the congregation, have to the exclusive possession and disposal of the meeting-house, prayed the Lord Ordinary "for an interdict, prohibiting and discharging the said Thomas M'Crie from preaching in the meeting-house of said congregation, and also prohibiting and discharging him, and all others, from troubling or molesting the said James Hay, or any other minister whom the Associate Synod, or the Presbytery to which our congregation belongs, may at any future time appoint to preach in said church."—(*Information for the Rev. Thomas M'Crie, &c.*, May 12, 1807.)

The opposite party, aware of this objection, assert, that "they found upon the sentence of deposition against Mr. M'Crie, not as a sentence of any court to which your Lordships can as such give effect, but merely as a piece of evidence to show that Mr. M'Crie no longer belongs to the Associate Synod."—(*Petition of John M'Intyre, &c.*, Nov. 11, 1806.) Had this been all, there was no occasion for producing such "a piece of evidence," as Mr. M'Crie was quite ready to acknowledge the fact. But it is too plain, that they meant it to militate against his civil rights, by holding him up to the court as a schismatick, a point which could only be ascertained by examining into the grounds of the sentence. Accordingly, they labour to show, in support of that sentence, that Mr. M'Crie had changed his principles, while the Associate Synod had kept steady to theirs. "The Suspenders are truly calling on your Lordships to exercise a power over the consciences of the petitioners, in as much as they would have you put in execution a sentence of the Synod, which has no other foundation, than that Mr. M'Crie, without doing violence to his own mind and religious principles, could not bring himself to acquiesce in those new doctrines, which a majority of the Synod have lately adopted and declared."—(*Petition of the Rev. Thomas M'Crie, &c.*, Nov. 18, 1806.)

points which involved a proper understanding of "Gib's Display," and "Nairn's Reasons of Dissent."

In some instances, these applications led to scenes not very creditable to the cause of religion. At Kirriemuir, where the popularity of Mr. Aitken had attracted great crowds from the surrounding country, to witness the ceremony of his deposition, the Synod party having failed to obtain possession of the keys of the meeting-house, and apprehending a riot, made application to the commander of the volunteers, to draw out his troop for their protection. This was refused, and on the appointed sabbath, (22d September 1806,) Mr. Aitken, to prevent an unseemly collision, retired, with an immense multitude, to a tent in an adjoining field. The scene which ensued is thus described by himself in a manuscript account in my possession: "The great body of the people immediately followed him. In his way to the tent, he met the Synod's minister, accompanied by the procurator and five or six sheriff-officers, with a crowd of children at their heels. Upon their arrival at the meeting-house, various methods, it is said, were suggested for getting access. A blacksmith, noted in the place, and, it is supposed, the only person who could have been prevailed upon to undertake such a business, was employed to pick the lock. In this he either was unsuccessful, or pretended to be so, for the purpose of affording some more entertainment to the attending mob. Some proposed scaling the upper windows by means of a ladder. An attempt was made to get in at a lower window, and a pane of glass was broken for that purpose. These methods proving ineffectual, the blacksmith went to the other end of the town for his forehammer, by repeated strokes of which on the door, it was at last laid open. This scene, you may believe, occupied no short time, during all which the minister was a spectator, if not, as some report, a principal director of the measures. You will naturally ask how many members of the congregation were there who had embraced the

Synod's new principles, in whose name and for whose sake all this violence and profanation of the Lord's day took place? Only *twenty-four* or *twenty-five* persons, men and women included. No more belonging to the congregation entered the meeting-house that day. Such was the number of persons, who, having first relinquished their former religious profession and solemn vows, did with the countenance, and under the influence and direction of the Synod, sacrilegiously and violently take possession, on the Lord's day, of the meeting-house of a congregation continuing to adhere to every part of the common profession for which that house was erected, and give their countenance to a daring profanation of the name, ordinances, and day of the Lord, by the reading of a sentence of deposition and excommunication against their minister, passed solely on the ground of his adhering to his ordination vows, and acting in correspondence to them. 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they have done.'"

Mr. Bruce's turn came next. "I learn," writes Mr. M'Crie to him, September 23, 1806, "that the summons of the Synod was served upon you last week with all the formalities borrowed from an established church.\* Spiritual, wholly spiritual as the church is said to be, it seems that it is requisite that a tip-staff or messenger-at-arms should trudge all the way from Edinburgh to Whitburn, and from his

\* The Seceders were not accustomed formerly to employ such formalities, considering them unsuitable to their circumstances, I suppose, as their community was not recognised in law. The Antiburghers, when they deposed their brethren the Burghers, did not seek to dispossess them of their meeting-houses. I am disposed to trace many of these ridiculous attempts at legal doings, to their having taken into their counsel some gentlemen of the law, who led their simple clients much deeper into the mysteries of the profession, than they would ever have thought of, had they been left to themselves. In perusing the minutes of the Potterrow congregation, kept by the new-light party about this time, it is amusing to observe the change which "comes over the spirit of their dream," and the tenour of their documents, when "James Rae, writer in Edinburgh, was appointed by the meeting to act as assistant clerk to Thomas Turnbull, the Congregational clerk."

allowance of five shillings should hire two weavers from their looms to go along with him; and in the morning, before you have time to escape, execute upon you, in all due form, the legal citation! Were *these* among the spiritual means which the Apostles used for retaining men in the church, or casting them out of it? Mr. Hogg would write you the manner in which his was served, less ceremoniously, but more unfeelingly. If they have it in their power, you will both of you have another summons served upon you, by a different messenger, interdicting you from your pulpits, kirks, and manses. In my case, the latter preceded the former a day, nor did he think it necessary to use the same formality of witnesses." The Presbytery of Edinburgh, to whom the Professor's case was remitted, had considerable difficulty in managing it. The sagacious old gentleman would not consent to criminate himself by admitting, what he considered it their business to prove, that he was a member of the obnoxious meeting of Presbytery at Whitburn; and not a single witness could be got to depone to the fact, his congregation having unanimously adhered to their pastor. They were obliged, accordingly, to proceed on more general grounds, and, on the 7th of October 1806, he was deposed for this among other reasons common to him with the rest, that "*he does not deny* that he is a member of a Presbytery lately erected, separate from, and in opposition to the Synod; but only says that such a Presbytery has not been publicly announced, and the Presbytery must therefore consider this fact as admitted by him." This sentence was never publicly intimated, the minister on whom the task was devolved having, partly from aversion to the execution of it, and partly, it is said, from bodily fear, never approached the scene of action.\*

\* This minister was the Rev. Mr. Oliver of Craigmaitlen, near Linlithgow, one of those eccentric characters, once common in the Secession, though now fast disappearing under the levelling influence of modern refinement, of whom many anecdotes were

Mr. Chalmers was deposed on the 28th July 1807. The minister employed to intimate this sentence proved more courageous than the last; for he not only preached, but published the sermon delivered on the sad occasion, under the title of "Consolation to the Church."\* Mr. Hogg being on his death-bed, his case was delayed, from the likelihood, as some of them expressed it, that "the Lord would soon remove him out of the way"—an expectation which was speedily realized.

Notwithstanding these severe measures, the protesting ministers were enabled, through grace, "in patience to possess their souls." The most trying part of their lot was to bear the misconstructions which were put on their conduct, and the misrepresentations which were made of their principles. They were held forth, from the pulpit and the press, as a set of prejudiced and narrow-minded men, who had adopted views hitherto unknown in the Secession, which they could neither explain nor defend, who were breaking the peace of the church for mere crotchets, and whose principles, so far as they were intelligible, would lead to persecution.

Most of the members of the Constitutional Presbytery published Addresses to their congregations, explaining the grounds of their separation from the General Synod, and vindicating their conduct from

told by their cotemporaries. On the occasion above referred to, he started from his seat in the Presbytery, exclaiming, "Me preach the professor's pulpit vacant, Moderator! *They would stane me like a dog.*"

\* "Consolation to the Church," by Robert Culbertson, Minister of the Gospel, Leith. "Mr. Culbertson's candle of *consolation* must not be put out, nor placed under a bushel or a bed, after having twinkled for an hour or two at Haddington, but set up more conspicuously and permanently, by means of a shilling pamphlet, that it may shed its benign radiance on all the new-light mourners of the land. Sermons preached on occasions of ordaining persons to the office of the holy ministry have often been published, but it is one among the many new things of the present time to publish discourses at the intimation of a sentence prohibiting one from *speaking any more in the name of Jesus.*"—Mr. Chalmers' *Address*, p. 77.

the aspersions to which it had subjected them. Those who desire full information of the processes against the protesters, may be referred to Mr. Bruce's Review of the Proceedings of the General Associate Synod." They may be surprised to find a volume of 421 pages entirely occupied with proofs of "the irregularity, injustice and nullity of the censures inflicted" on the protesting brethren, and "remarks upon the misrepresentations, falsehoods and aspersions" propagated against them. These disclosures, however necessary at the time, are of little farther use now than to show how far party spirit will blind the judgment and bias the decisions of Church Courts, composed of men whose piety and good sense in private life are unquestionable. "I have perused the Review," says Dr. McCrie to its author in 1808, "with much gratification. With the view of procuring a candid perusal from some of our late connexions, I could not help wishing that some of the minute details had been abridged, and that some severe expressions had been softened." Mr. Turnbull of Glasgow, a learned Hebrew scholar and teacher, and a man of a peculiar vein of humour, published a sarcastic pamphlet on the subject, entitled, "Old light better than pretended New," with the motto, "No man having drunk old wine straightway desireth new; for he saith, The old is better." The subject of our memoir, speaking of this piece, says, "A great outcry will be made about the severity of it: but the saltness of the salt is connected with its savour. The peculiar manner of the author throws an obscurity over the argument in some places, which will hinder a great number from perceiving its meaning and force. But it contains a number of important facts and invincible reasonings." Mr. Chalmers, who joined the Presbytery in 1807, in his address to his congregation, formerly noticed, discusses the question at considerable length. Mr. Hogg's briefer address is distinguished for its affectionate simplicity and closeness of appeal.\*

\* The following may be given as a specimen of this excellent man's Address, which, having been written very shortly before

The subsequent History of the Constitutional Presbytery presents little that can be interesting to the public. Having declared to the world the ground on which they stood, they showed no ambition to increase their numbers, or to gain popularity. Contented with steadfastly maintaining, in their humble spheres, and with the few who adhered to them from principle, the cause which was dear to their hearts, they supplied with preaching those congregations who petitioned to be received into their communion on the old terms of fellowship; but they required

his death, may be viewed as his "dying testimony:"—"You are apt, brethren, to be prejudiced against civil establishments, because you often see civil authority on the side of a false, not on that of the true, religion. Even when the substance of an establishment is good, and the authorized standards of a church unexceptionable, yet you see the end of the establishment defeated.—You see the legal provision made for the support of a ministry adhering to the authorized standards, and bound to regulate their conduct by them, devoured by a ministry denying and destroying what they engaged to maintain and support. You see, in a word, a scriptural creed and an anti-scriptural ministry. This is a serious evil, and much to be lamented. But still it is an abuse of what is good in itself; and from the abuse made of any thing, no argument should be drawn against it. What the Persian kings did, in giving money out of their treasures for the building of the temple, and beasts, wheat and oil out of their stores for the service of God,—would not have ceased to be good, though those to whom they were given had not employed them for the purposes for which they were intended. Because you see no establishment of what you can fully approve, does it therefore follow, that no such establishment has ever been or can be made?—Suppose for a moment, brethren, that the whole of the covenanted Reformation is again revived and restored; that the present corruptions of the Church of Scotland are removed; that she and her ministers are as pure as her standards require them to be; that in this way the causes of separation from the National Church are no more; that the whole Secession body, and others who have withdrawn from the National Church on account of her corruptions, do instantly return to her bosom; that our unhappy divisions are at an end, peace and harmony restored; that, agreeable to the intention of the Westminster Standards and our Covenants, the Lord becomes one and his name one in these three nations; and even in other kingdoms embracing the same religion with us; would not this be a happy and glorious event? Who would not rejoice to see it? Beware then, brethren, of adopting opinions which would render it impossible, or hinder you from profiting by it, should it take place. Yet this you would do, should you renounce your former profession, and adopt the New Testimony."



from all who joined them an explicit pledge of their adherence to the principles of the Secession; nor did they, under the pretence of liberality, seek to enlarge their society, by opening a door for the admission of any malcontents who might be dissatisfied, on personal grounds, with other communions. Their object was not to raise a party, but to maintain a cause. Acting on such principles, their numbers, it may be easily supposed, were never considerable; at the same time, it would be unfair to measure by the members who acceded to them, the amount of adherence to their principles then existing in the country. Many, it is believed, remained connected with the Synod, from attachment to their ministers, who yet retained their liking to the good old cause; and had the Constitutional Presbytery met the demand for sermon by a more regular and more popular supply than they were enabled to afford, they would no doubt have made a much more respectable figure in the eye of the world. But the relics of a purer age of Seceders soon died out; and their descendants, uninstructed in the principles of their fathers, now form that mass of dissent which threatens the existence of the Establishment. The Constitutional Presbytery, "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment," continued, for twenty-one years, to enjoy in each other's fellowship, a peace and felicity to which they had long been strangers; till, in 1827, they were harmoniously blended with another body of Protesters from the same Synod, under the common name of Original Seceders.

In the midst of "the storm of contention and strife," which we have now described, Mr. M'Crie did not remit his literary occupations. About the beginning of the year 1803, he had undertaken to assist his friend, Mr. Whytock, in conducting the Christian Magazine, a monthly periodical, the first series of which commenced in 1797, and was continued till

the end of 1806. This series of the magazine is distinguished for the solidity of its matter and soundness of its views; and, with little pretension to literary merit, it contains a valuable collection of papers on doctrinal and practical subjects, well adapted to popular edification. To this miscellany our author contributed a variety of articles under different signatures—that of *Philistor* (lover of history) being usually affixed to his papers on historical subjects. The *Christian Magazine*, though conducted on the strictest principles of Calvinism, was preserved, during the progress of the first series, perfectly free from all sectarian or party bias—it was supported by both sections of the Secession—and (O how unlike our modern periodicals!) all politics, ecclesiastical as well as secular, were carefully excluded. This did not arise, on the part of our author at least, from indifference to the subject of church government, the general principles of which were frequently illustrated in their practical application. “We have new rivals starting every month,” he writes to the Professor, after urging him to contribute to the magazine which had newly come under his management, March, 1803. “Did you see the advertisement of the Scots Presbyterian Magazine, to be conducted under the direction of ministers of the Established Church? They profess themselves believers in the standards of the Church of Scotland, and they will be ready to defend the venerable fabric which their fathers reared at so much expense, and in defence of which they suffered and bled, against the rude attacks of assailants. Yet they will leave ‘the bigot to waste his zeal upon forms of church government—as for them they look upon these as but anise, mint and cummin!’”

The first number of the Magazine for 1803, involved our editor in a very delicate question. An extraordinary commotion had appeared the preceding year in America, particularly among the Presbyterians of the General Assembly, resembling those re-

vivals which have since become so familiar in that country. At one sacrament in Kentucky, it was supposed, not less than a thousand persons fell prostrate to the ground, among whom were many infidels. One account informs us, that "immediately before they become totally powerless, they are seized with a general tremor, and sometimes, though not often, they utter one or two piercing shrieks in the moment of falling. Persons in this situation are affected in different degrees; sometimes, when unable to stand or sit, they have the use of their hands, and can converse with perfect composure. In other cases, they are unable to speak, and they draw a difficult breath, about one in a minute: in some instances their extremities become cold, and pulsation, breathing, and all the signs of life, forsake them for nearly an hour. Numbers of thoughtless sinners have fallen as suddenly as if struck with lightning, and sometimes at the very moment when they were uttering blasphemies against the work." By some this was represented as the effect of the pouring out of the Spirit, and extolled as a remarkable revival of religion; by others, it was viewed as the work of the devil. Seceders, it must be allowed, have always been jealous of such demonstrations; the genius of their system, whatever may be its faults, has never been propitious, nor its followers very prone, to enthusiastic extremes. "I have to remark," says one of their ministers, writing a description of the scenes in America, "that nothing of that kind has taken place *among our people*." Some remarks were appended to these accounts in the Magazine, representing the extravagance and disorder of the scenes described, as "apt to lead people into a dangerous delusion about the state of their souls," and accounting for the impressions and agitations, in a great measure, "by considering the power of contagion, and the influence of example."\*

\*The violence with which some of the Secession ministers inveighed against the work at Cambuslang, has been frequently, and, in some degree, justly condemned. It cannot be denied,

“If I had drawn up these remarks,” says Mr. M'Crie, in answer to a friend who had hinted his dissatisfaction with them, “I might not have expressed the matter so strongly, or might perhaps have introduced an additional caution. But after all, as drawn, I cannot say that I disapprove of any part of them, though if you had pointed out any particular which displeased you, I might have altered my opinion. But I rather suppose it is a *certain something* pervading the whole, which you think should not have been there. Whatever good has been done, (and it is not denied that good has been done,) whatever devils have been cast out, that was done, not by the devil, but by God. But it was the work in general, especially the uncommon form which it assumed, which was the point in question. Was it from heaven or not? Was it the Spirit of God, or was it another spirit, that caused those strange and awful bodily and mental convulsions? It will not, I imagine, be satisfactory, merely to allow irregularities, and then denominate it a good work—a revival of religion. If the editors, therefore, were to give any “certain sound” for the direction of their readers, I do not see what other opinion they could have given. Delicacy and reverence, it is true, are requisite, as to every thing that may affect the work of the Spirit in the point you mention; but is there not equal neces-

that, in their zeal for the honour of injured truth, they may have deserved the reproof which a better man than Eldad or Medad received, for finding fault with them, “Enviest thou for my sake?” I have been informed, on good authority, that Mr. Adam Gib, to whose influence probably may be ascribed the tartness which appears in any public documents on this point, regretted, before his death, that he had written so keenly concerning that work in his pamphlet against Whitefield. It is but fair to add, that the Seeders lamented the extravagancies which appeared on that occasion, chiefly as calculated to throw discredit on the real work of the Spirit in the reviving of religion, for which none prayed more devoutly than they; and that they dreaded, not without reason, that it might have the effect of reconciling good men in that Church to abuses radically pernicious, and to the continuance of an ecclesiastical policy, manifestly incompatible with a general or permanent revival of piety in the land.

sity of attention on another quarter—I mean as to the imputing of a work to Him that is inconsistent with his nature or manner of operation, or suffering such an imputation? In one respect, there is a more urgent call to declare against this at present, than there was in the days of our fathers as to the business at Cambuslang. Infidels are greatly multiplied, and are ready to make a dexterous handle of this against all revealed religion and all seriousness. Besides, the remarks do very sparingly attribute a share of this work to the devil, and I thought were rather open to the objection of ascribing too much to natural causes and animal mechanism. I shall only add farther, that the late venerable Dr. Erskine, who in this cause was *omni exceptione major*, perused the remarks among the last things he read, and signified his acquiescence in them.”

In the following list of his historical contributions to the Christian Magazine, the reader will easily discover the germs of some of our author's subsequent works. In September 1802, appears a translation of Principal Smeton's "Account of the concluding part of the Life and the Death of that illustrious man, John Knox, the most faithful Restorer of the Church of Scotland;"—in July 1803, a "Memoir of Mr. John Murray," minister of Leith and Dunfermline, in the beginning of the 17th century;—in November 1803, "A Sketch of the Progress of the Reformation in Spain, with an account of the Spanish Protestant Martyrs;" which is followed, in January 1804, with "The Suppression of the Reformation in Spain;"—in October, November, and December, 1805, "The Life of Dr. Andrew Rivet," a French Protestant Divine;—in January 1806, "The Life of Patrick Hamilton, the Proto-Martyr of the Reformation in Scotland;—in February 1806, "The Life of Francis Lambert of Avignon;"—and in five numbers, from June to October of the same year, "The Life of Alexander Henderson."

The most important of these communications is

the Life of Henderson, which, though the last on the list, and never made the subject of a separate work, very early engaged his attention, and was in fact his first essay in biography. The following references to it occur in his correspondence with Mr. Bruce: *March 14, 1803.*—"For some time past I have had my eye towards a sketch of the life of Mr. Alexander Henderson. But reverence for the greatness of his character, and a conviction of inability to do justice to it, have kept me from doing any thing except marking down a few references to authorities and facts." *June 1.*—"I have not yet been able to send you the memoirs of Mr. Henderson. I have got him as yet no farther than *Dunse-law*, my native hill. I procured from a library here Row's History of the Kirk of Scotland, to search for information as to the early period of his ministry. But I met with other things there which attracted my attention, and kept me extracting now and then for some weeks, and my original purpose has been allowed to sleep." *November 16.*—"I trouble you with another packet. You must not exclaim as Pope did, for it is neither "a virgin tragedy" nor an "orphan muse" which solicits your revisal, correction and patronage, but a rude "tale of other times," which you may think it worth while to read, but which will be condemned as dry and puritanical (if not treasonable) by the public." *December 7.*—"As to the separate publication, (publishing it in a separate volume,) I cannot say. The taste of the times is very opposite to any thing of the kind, and I ought not to think that any feeble effort of mine can work a change. However, as you have suggested this, I shall use the freedom of mentioning to you a floating idea which has sometimes passed through my mind, without ever assuming the formality of a resolution or design, namely, a selection of Lives of Scottish Reformers in some such order as to embrace the most important periods of the history of the Church of Scotland; in which a number of facts which are reckoned too minute and trivial for

general history might be brought to bear upon and occasionally illustrate it. The order, for instance, might be, (I write merely from the recollection of the moment,) Patrick Hamilton, George Wishart, John Knox, John Craig, Andrew Melville, Patrick Simpson, Robert Bruce, &c. This I mention merely with a view of having your opinion. As I never formed the purpose, so, if undertaken, it would only be executed gradually and at leisure. I have made no preparations, except marking down an incidental fact or authority as they occurred in course of common reading. You will not give your approbation to the thought, unless after being, upon reflection, satisfied with it; for your judgment will have weight in turning my mind to the subject, and may involve yourself in trouble such as you have already experienced."

In reply to this suggestion Mr. Bruce says, with characteristic caution, (*December 27, 1803*), "I have not yet duly pondered the admonition, that 'of making (and of reading) many books there is no end.' Often have I been wearying the flesh alternately in both, and am not yet thoroughly delivered from the 'sore evil.' I am not, therefore, the fittest hand to advise others. The compilations you hint at have a fair prospect of usefulness, and one can hardly be engaged in such a design without reaping benefit to himself sufficient to repay his labour; you have also a favourable opportunity above many from your situation for carrying on such researches. I would wish them success; but knowing how many literary projects have floated in my mind or engaged my studies for a time, that must prove abortive, and for fear you should impose too heavy a task on yourself, I dare not be too urgent." This seems to have damped our author's project; for in February 1804, he replies, "What I mentioned to you in regard to a series of biographical sketches was but a floating idea. Upon second thoughts the difficulties of it appeared so great as to suppress any hope of carrying it into exe-

cution. All that I can propose to do is to jot down any thing that may occur in the course of reading. I have even laid aside the sketch which I had finished." In point of fact, the memoir of Henderson did not appear till two years afterwards; and I am disposed to think it would not have been published even then, had not an absolute dearth of materials for the Magazine, a calamity too well known to editors of such periodicals, compelled him to draw very largely on his own resources. It has often been lamented that he did not devote himself, in a separate and enlarged work, to the life and times of Alexander Henderson. This he certainly, at one time, contemplated; but before he reached that period in his historical career, his bodily strength was too much exhausted to admit of his bestowing that degree of labour and research which, in his view, the history of Henderson's life demanded. To supply, as far as possible, what must still be considered a *desideratum*, it is proposed to republish, in the volume of his Miscellaneous Works, the series of papers as they appeared in the Christian Magazine. Making allowances for the circumstances under which it was composed and published, this sketch, viewed as a first effort, will not, it is hoped, be considered unworthy of the author of Knox, and may serve at least as a record of his sentiments on that interesting portion of our ecclesiastical history.

The death of Mr. Whytock left him sole editor of this Miscellany, during the year 1806; and owing to the peculiar circumstances in which he was placed with his brethren, many of whom ceased their contributions, the task of superintendence became as delicate as it was laborious. He was glad, at the close of the year, to escape from the thankless employment, which had occupied too much of his time, and which he took care never to resume at any future period.

From the manuscripts which he has left, it appears that he was the author of a small pamphlet in 1807,



entitled, "Letters on the late Catholic Bill, and the Discussions to which it has given rise: Addressed to British Protestants, and chiefly Presbyterians in Scotland. By a Scots Presbyterian." The bill here referred to was that introduced by Lord Howick, (afterwards Earl Grey,) the real object of which was to admit Roman Catholics to places of command in the army and navy, and had excited keen discussions throughout the empire. In these our author felt a deep interest. The result of his inquiries into the civil and religious history of his country, was a settled conviction of the lawfulness and necessity of those barriers which our ancestors had raised to oppose the aggressive and domineering spirit of Popery. With our ablest legislators at the time, he saw in the measure then proposed, the commencement of a series of concessions which would ultimately sweep these barriers away, when "Parliament would have that extorted from its weakness which its wisdom would be desirous to withhold." The following extract from the pamphlet, may serve as a specimen to identify the author, and as a record of his early sentiments on this point, which he preserved to the end of his life.

"Whatever skeptical politicians and indifferentists may think, religion and civil polity are intimately connected, nor will any wise legislator be indifferent about the concerns of the former. Religion lies at the foundation of good government, and is its firmest support. The most enlightened nations, in ancient or modern times, have made it a primary object of legislation, and its public support and maintenance among them have been secured by fundamental laws. In Britain, the legal maintenance of the Protestant religion, with security to its professors against the tyranny and perfidy of Roman Catholics, has, from the era of the Reformation, been a principal object of policy. The laws enacted for this purpose have been viewed as an important part of our constitution, and as connected with the preservation of our liberties,

civil and religious. As it is the official duty of legislators to guard the religious rights and privileges of the nation, so it becomes the people to exercise a higher degree of zeal and vigilance respecting these. If ever the time shall come in which both shall resign themselves to indifference about them, the ruin of Britain will not be far distant. Nor are there wanting symptoms of this spirit at the present period, when the sense of religion upon the minds of all classes of men is so weak; and when so many seem to regard all religions as equal, and represent it as a matter of no moment, at least in a political view, of what religion a man may be, or whether he has any religion at all."

To this we may add his opinion of the Whig Ministry, by whom the bill was proposed:—"Against the late ministers I had no prejudice, nor have I any desire to harass them, after they have retired, or been driven from office. The character of their administration must not be risked upon the Catholic bill, but upon other and less questionable measures; particularly on their exertions for abolishing, what has long been Britain's disgrace, the infamous African slave-traffic, for which they have already obtained the approbation of the wisest and best part of the nation, and may look for the applause of posterity. Of their talents for the station which they occupied I have been accustomed to entertain a high estimation, and of their public spirit and regard to national liberties I am still disposed to indulge, upon the whole, a favourable opinion. But this cannot prevent me from expressing my disapprobation of their late bill, and of its principles in the extent to which they have applied them; and as this judgment has been formed independently of the influence of all parties and factions, political or ecclesiastical, I must be allowed to express it with the freedom of a British Protestant and Scottish Presbyterian." It had been the intention of the author to prosecute the subject in a series of letters, the different topics of which

he announces; but whether from finding that the public interest in the question had abated in consequence of the bill being thrown out, or from despairing of any thing being done to arrest the current of popular opinion in favour of the measure, only one letter appeared, and, so far as I know, he never owned nor alluded to the pamphlet.

At this time his health, which had never been robust, began to be seriously affected by the labour, anxiety and confinement to which he was subjected. He complains (Dec. 17, 1807) that, owing to his numerous avocations, he had “for some time back, been neglecting his own congregation and Sabbath-preparation, as well as bodily health and necessary exercise.” “I cannot say I have any formed complaint, and yet I am not well. I can crawl about, and would do well enough if people would let me alone; but I cannot bear to converse.” After mentioning the recovery of a much esteemed friend from a dangerous illness, he adds, “‘Death’s thousand doors stand open;’ but the once dead and now living Redeemer holds the *keys* of hell and of death, and not one of his people shall go but at the best time, nor pass by the wrong way. Is there not much implied in that expression, ‘PRECIOUS in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints?’”

“*January 18, 1808.*—Mr. Hogg, on the day before his death, declared to three of his congregation who had called on him, his great satisfaction with what he had done as to the public cause, and his full persuasion of its being the cause of God. He afterwards desired his wife to bring him a Bible,—said he was unable to read, but, holding it in his hand, expressed how much satisfaction he had had in it, and that though he had studied it all his days, he had never felt it so precious as now; adding to his wife, ‘Read that book often, and make the children read it.’”\*

He was soon called on to test the strength of these

\* To the Rev. James Aitken.

consolations by a severe domestic bereavement, in the death of his son James, an amiable child, who had become doubly endeared to his parents by the sweet resignation with which he endured a lingering illness, and who died, Nov. 9, 1809, in the eighth year of his age. "My poor Jamie," he writes on the 25th of October previous, "is very weakly. I have very little prospect of his recovery. God speaks "once, yea twice" unto us; yet how dull are we and slow to hear and receive instruction. How I shall be able to sustain the trial which I sometimes endeavour to look at, I know not. The prospect is dark. The Lord can give light. I need your sympathy and prayers. When the child died, he was enabled to bear the stroke with apparent fortitude, but what his feelings may have been I have it not in my power to tell; for on such occasions he concealed even from his own family the deep and still current of his emotions, and wept, if he did weep, "in secret places."

His leisure was now entirely devoted to historical studies; and nothing remarkable occurs in his history during the intervening years, till the publication of the Life of John Knox.

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## CHAPTER IV.

THE PUBLICATION OF THE LIFE OF KNOX.

1811—1813.

THE publication of the Life of John Knox formed an important era in the history of its author, and on various accounts deserves particular notice in a Life of Dr. M'Crie, whose name has become associated with that of the reformer. The circumstances relating to the history of the work, its particular character and the manner of its execution, the additions which it has made to the literature and ecclesiastical history of

the country, its connexion with public interests, and the effects which it has already produced, as well as those which it may hereafter produce on society, would furnish large matter for observation. Instead, however, of dwelling on topics which properly come within the range of the reviewer, we shall endeavour to confine our remarks to such points in the history and character of the work, as belong more strictly to the biography of the author.

To those who are curious to know the circumstances which first led the author to devote himself to historical researches, it may not be uninteresting to mention that he himself used to trace his inquiries to a very simple incident. In the course of family visitation, at a very early period of his ministry, he found himself puzzled to answer a question in our National Church history, proposed to him by an old woman belonging to his flock. Ashamed of his ignorance, he went home resolved on a course of reading which should render him better prepared to meet similar queries in time to come. From that day, his mind became more and more engrossed in his favourite pursuits. In 1800, in reply to a friend, who asked what he could do for him in London, "Send me," he writes, "any thing respecting the history of the British Churches." From his note-books, it appears that he had minutely studied the history of Christianity in Scotland from its earliest dawn, in the writings of our most ancient chroniclers. And we have already seen, from the fruits of his investigations in the Christian Magazine, that the history of the Reformation claimed a very large share of his attention before the year 1806. Mr. Bruce had no small influence in determining him to *biography*, as the best mode of eliciting and recommending the history of that period.

In the preface to the first edition of Knox, the author briefly adverts to the motives which engaged him in the undertaking. "Though many able writers have employed their talents in tracing the

causes and consequences of the Reformation, and though the leading facts respecting its progress in Scotland have been repeatedly stated, it occurred to me that the subject was by no means exhausted. I was confirmed in this opinion by a more minute examination of the ecclesiastical history of this country, which I began, for my own satisfaction, several years ago. While I was pleased at finding that there existed such ample materials for illustrating the history of the Scottish Reformation, I could not but regret that no one had undertaken to digest and exhibit the information on this subject, which lay hid in manuscripts, and in books which are now little known or consulted. Not presuming, however, that I had the ability or the leisure requisite for executing a task of such difficulty and extent, I formed the design of drawing up memorials of our national Reformer, in which his personal history might be combined with illustrations of the progress of that great undertaking, in the advancement of which he acted so conspicuous a part."

There can be no doubt that the controversy relating to the religious profession which he had espoused, had no small influence in guiding and determining his mind to the investigations which issued in the production of this work. To a friend who once questioned him on the subject, he did not scruple to avow, that had it not been for "new-light," he would probably never have thought of writing the *Life of Knox*. He soon discovered that the new principles went to condemn the whole plan of reformation pursued by our ancestors; and it was "for his own satisfaction," on this important point, that he was led to prosecute his inquiries into the history of the Scottish Church. It may be remarked, at the same time, that whatever influence this controversy may have had in directing his studies, he has never availed himself of the numerous opportunities which his narrative afforded him of adverting to the party contentions in which he had been so lately involved, or of resent-

ing, even by an incidental expression, the personal treatment which he had received.

At what precise time he "formed the design of drawing up memorials of our National Reformer," I am unable to say, and probably he himself could not have given a particular account of the circumstances which first suggested the idea. Though his materials had been long accumulating, it does not appear from his correspondence that he had commenced the work of composition, till after the publication of the Statement in 1807. He informs us in the preface, that he was "encouraged to prosecute his design, in consequence of his possessing a manuscript volume of Knox's Letters, which throw considerable light upon his character and history." This valuable collection, which he procured from Mr. Maurice Ogle of Glasgow, did not come into his possession till after the period now mentioned.

But though thus invited into the field of historic inquiry, he soon found it to possess charms, independent of the satisfaction which it imparted to his mind on the question referred to. The course of his investigations brought before his view the Church of Scotland, "looking forth, as in the morning of her day, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners;"\* and the impression produced was ineffaceable. The sad changes which time and defection had wrought in her modern representative, and which had made others turn from her in despair, or seek her subversion, only served to enhance in his mind the admiration which her primitive purity and worth had awakened; and what attracted him to the task of writing the life of the Reformer was, not merely a desire to vindicate his memory from the reproach under which it had so long lain, or a taste for describing what is interesting in incident and character, but a profound conviction of the divine truth of the principles which Knox had espoused, and of the importance of the work in which

\* Dr. M'Crie's Sermons, p. 346.

he performed so conspicuous a part. "I had read," he said, not many years ago, "I had read the deeds of her reformers and confessors, at first, with mere youthful curiosity. It was not until I had satisfied myself that the system of doctrine and discipline they introduced was not more consonant to the oracles of truth than it was conducive to the best interests, temporal and spiritual, of the nation, that I minutely studied their history. Then, I confess, the fire began to burn, and I could not forbear to impart to others what I myself had felt. If my writings have commended themselves in any degree to any person, it is not owing to any talents or labour of mine bestowed on them, but solely to the feeling I have now expressed—a feeling of admiration, not for the men, (for they are deceased, and have given in their accounts,) but for the grace and gifts with which God endowed them, and the fabric which they were honoured to rear."\*

Among the causes which gave birth to this work, and contributed to its success, we cannot overlook the peculiar cast of the author's mind, and the congeniality of his sentiments with those of the Scottish Reformers. With a keen eye for the discernment of human character, he certainly possessed that turn for description, which, in the historian, as in the painter, must be considered a natural gift, indicating the presence of what Johnson calls "a large general power, wholly determined to some particular direction." As a Seceder, he was pledged to the approval of the principles on which the Reformation was founded; and in his private judgment, matured by years and close investigation, he coincided, in every material point, with the opinions of its founders. While the great doctrines of the Cross occupied as high a place in his esteem as they did in the standards of the reformed churches, he was a decided friend to the ecclesiastical polity of the Scottish Church, and

\* From a Speech delivered at a meeting of the Anti-patronage Society, December 2, 1833.



the plans pursued by her rulers both in the first and second periods of her reformation. In his political as well as his polemical views, he was like-minded with the subject of his biography; and even in the general tone of his character, there was some striking points of harmony between him, and the upright disinterested and intrepid champion of the Reformation. In short, it is certain that in studying the history of the Reformers, "he sympathized with them in their sufferings, their anxieties, their struggles, and their triumphs."\* It is easy to see that, with such qualifications, he was prepared to execute his task *con amore*; that with him it was truly a work and labour of love; and that all the powers of the artist must have been summoned to do justice to a subject, which had already won the affections of the man.

This may be the proper place for noticing his method of composition, which was in some respects peculiar. After a course of reading, during which he collected his materials, arranged in the form of notes, and references on the various topics to be introduced, his practice was to commence at once the work of composition, as if preparing for the press. He seldom wrote out any sketch or rude draft of his subject. Having discovered the mine, he sunk his shaft, and explored the veins of historical information as he went along; so that the plan of the intended book was gradually *worked out*, after having gone over the ground and made himself completely master of the subject. It is obvious that what he gained by such a method in point of precision, he must have lost in facility and despatch. In truth, he composed slowly, and frequently complained of being "hampered" in finding expressions to please himself, and in disposing of his materials. Most of his manuscript was re-composed more than once, before committing it to the press, and exhibited in its innumerable emendations, a curious specimen of the *multa dies et*

\* Presbyterian Review for March 1836, p. 4.

*multa litura* of the poet. The last copy was too often written after going to press. "I have every word of it to write," he says of one of his works, "as it goes to the printer, and the greater part of what has been printed has been newly composed. This is a very preposterous course; but I have got a vicious habit, that I can do nothing until I am pushed, and accordingly it is not done till the last moment. *Video meliora,*" &c. The "pushing" to which he here refers, was perhaps necessary in some measure to aid in the production of his thoughts, which instead of flowing easily from his mind, seem to have been obtained, like some essential oils, by a species of mental compression. This mode of composition, too, may have had its own use, in concentrating his mind, and obliging him, instead of groping after materials to fill up a projected scheme, to grapple with his facts, one by one, as he approached them.\* "You speak," he says to one of his correspondents in April 1810, "of going to press, and getting through it, as if you had found it an easy thing, or, shall I say, as one that never tried it. So far from being well through, I have not yet looked it in the face—have been employed all winter in collecting materials, and now and then filling up a blank. I am not a bit nearer the end than when you saw me. I would never make my bread by making books, as some have done." On October 15th of the same year, he writes, "I have not yet gone to press with Knox. A fact or two, near the beginning of the *Life*, which I wish to ascertain, keeps me back." On the 30th November 1811, he sends his correspondent a copy of the work, with these remarks: "The booksellers say that the edition will sell. I am sorry that the price fixed on it is so high, as to put it out of the

\* "Mallet, I believe, never wrote a single line of his projected *Life of the Duke of Marlborough*. He groped for materials; and thought of it till he had exhausted his mind. Thus it sometimes happens that men entangle themselves in their own schemes."—*Johnson, in Boswell's Life*, vol. iii., p. 308.

power of a large class of readers to purchase it, especially as they are the persons who may be supposed to have the greatest relish for the main subject. But owing to the size of the book, and the additional expense incurred by alterations which I often found it necessary to make upon the proof-sheets, it could not, I believe, be afforded cheaper. Even though it should all sell, the half of the profits (which was allotted to me) will not exceed three-pence per copy.”\*

The first edition of the Life was published in one volume octavo, November 1811.† John Knox presented his antique and ungracious visage before the public for some time, without attracting general attention. The author himself, as may appear from the extract given above, was far from anticipating the fame which it soon acquired; and was left to guess its fate from the familiar criticisms of his friends, in which praise and censure were blended according to the peculiar views and tempers of the writers. To these I find him humorously alluding, Feb. 1812, in answer to the charge brought by some zealous old Presbyterian, of having made too many concessions to modern liberality:—“I was much obliged to you for sending the extract from your friend’s letter respecting the Life of Knox. Flattery is dangerous: pure unmingled praise cloy the appetite, and needs not only to be repeated, but increased; and indiscriminate approbation is suspicious. The vanity of authors, however, will extract praise even out of the censures passed on them, and will congratulate themselves with the fond idea that they are right, when persons, on opposite sides, are pronouncing them wrong. When your letter came to hand, I had

\* To the Rev. James Aitken.

† “This day is published by John Ogle and William Blackwood, handsomely printed in one large volume octavo, price 12s. boards, *The Life of John Knox: (containing Illustrations of the History of the Reformation in Scotland, &c.)* By Thomas McCrie, Minister of the Gospel, Edinburgh.”—*Evening Courant*, Nov. 18, 1811.

received a critique (from a thorough-paced new-light writer) in the *Scripture Magazine*,\* in which I was accused of betraying ignorance of the spirit of the Gospel, proceeding upon Old Testament ideas, and vindicating reformation by carnal weapons. After reading your correspondent's animadversions, you need not doubt that I soothed myself with the old adage, *In medio tutissimus ibis.*" Testimonials to the value of the Life soon poured in upon him from various quarters, some of them from the first literary characters of the time; among the rest he was highly gratified by receiving a flattering commendation of the work from his old favourite professor, Mr. Dugald Stewart, who frequently paid him a visit, when he came to town. But none of these testimonials afforded him more sincere satisfaction than that which he received from his revered friend, Mr. Bruce. "You need not doubt," he writes to him, December 11, 1811, "that your approbation of Knox's Life is gratifying to me. Although I know that you love not flattery, I cannot expect the same approbation will come from other quarters. If I have been able to do any justice to the Scottish Reformation and Reformers, it may, in a very great degree, be ascribed to your example and influence; as you first directed

\* This periodical was conducted on the principles of the Baptists. It is curious to observe how the pietism of this respectable class of people had led them round, by a very different route indeed, to the tenets of high-church toryism. The *British Critic* himself, in his zeal for the divine right of kings, could not be more explicit in charging the reformers with the crime of rebellion, than these Baptists were, in their zeal for their favourite principle; which seemed to be, that Christianity does not warrant its followers to seek its promotion by contending for their civil liberties, because this contest necessarily requires the use of carnal weapons. They say that, "In his letter to the nobility, Knox in fact urges them to rebellion. An apostle would have exhorted the believers in Scotland, to honour the king while they feared God." In pleading the cause of the ruined monasteries, they outstrip even the antiquaries. "However beneficial the consequences may have been to this country, we consider his preaching in the Cathedrals, and procuring the demolition of the popish edifices, as *rebellion against the government.*"

my attention to the subject, and from your conversation and writings I received many of the hints of which I have availed myself.—I perceive a number of Latinisms and Scotticisms, and even grammatical blunders, which had escaped me. But provided any due measure of justice is done to the principles of the work by the literary censors, I shall endeavour to bear patiently their castigations of the style.”

What first brought the *Life of Knox* into notice, and paved the way for its popularity, was the flattering criticism of the work in the *Edinburgh Review* for July 1812. In this able article, which was well understood to come from the pen of the ingenious and talented Editor, the merits and general principles of the work were fully discussed and highly applauded, and the author's vindication of Knox was pronounced decidedly successful. The first impression generally produced on the readers of the *Life* was a feeling of surprise, occasioned by the entirely new light in which the subject had been represented, and considerably enhanced by the previous obscurity of the author: a feeling to which the reviewer, after advert- ing to the previous notions entertained of the Reformer, gives expression in the following paragraph, which may be quoted as containing his general opinion of the work:—“How unfair, and how marvellously incorrect these representations are, may be learned from the perusal of the work before us;—a work which has afforded us more amusement and more instruction, than any thing we ever read upon the subject; and which, independent of its theological merits, we do not hesitate to pronounce by far the best piece of history which has appeared since the commencement of our critical career. It is extremely accurate, learned and concise, and at the same time full of spirit and animation;—exhibiting, as it appears to us, a rare union of the patient research and sober judgment which characterize the more laborious class of historians, with the boldness of thinking and force of imagination which is sometimes substituted

in their place. It affords us very great pleasure to bear this public testimony to the merits of a writer who has been hitherto unknown, we believe, to the literary world either of this or the neighbouring country;—of whom, or of whose existence, though residing in the same city with ourselves, it was never our fortune to have heard till his volume was put into our hands; and who, in his first emergence from the humble obscurity in which he has pursued the studies and performed the duties of his profession, has presented the world with a work, which may put so many of his contemporaries to the blush, for the big promises they have broken, and the vast opportunities they have neglected.”

The Life of Knox was no doubt indebted, in some degree, for the high favour which it met with in the eyes of the Edinburgh Review, to its literary merits and to the tone of its political sentiments. It is but justice, however, to add, that the religious opinions of the Reformer are, in this article, treated with respect, that full credit is allowed to the Reformation for its happy influence on the state of education, and that among other merits of the work, due weight is attached to “the illustration which it affords of the close connexion between the principles of religion and of civil liberty.” Catching the national enthusiasm of the author, the sharp-sighted critic declares his conviction “that there is a natural affinity between genuine Presbyterianism and genuine Whiggism,” and “that it is owing in a great measure to the influence of *this* counteracting cause that we have been saved (if we are saved) from the degradation of the lowest servility.” The only deduction, indeed, from the language of commendation, is made when he comes to speak of the style of the author, who, he says, “has given us rather too much of our national phraseology. The book, to say the truth, is full of Scotticisms, and frequently deficient in verbal elegance and purity.” And he concludes by advising the author, “when he writes again—as we earnestly

hope he will be induced to do—to submit his manuscript to the revision of some slender clerk from the south, who may rectify his verbal errors, without presuming to meddle with his matter.”

This review was followed, in July 1813, by another, almost equally complimentary, from the Quarterly Reviewers. “Dr. M’Crie,” say they, “is really a great biographer, such as it has not been the lot of Knox’s equals, or even his superiors, always to attain; for, however ably the characters of Luther and Calvin have been treated in the general histories of their times, where has either of them found a biographer like the present?” “Compact and vigorous, often coarse, but never affected, without tumour and without verbosity, we can scarcely forbear to wonder by what effort of taste or discrimination the style of Dr. M’Crie has been preserved so nearly unpolluted by the disgusting and circumlocutory nonsense of his contemporaries. Here is no puling about the ‘interesting sufferer,’ ‘the patient saint,’ ‘the angelic preacher.’ Knox is plain Knox, in acting and in suffering always a hero, and his story is told as a hero would wish that it should be told, with simplicity, precision and force.” The Edinburgh Reviewer complained that the book was “full of Scotticisms;” “For which,” say those of the Quarterly, “we like it the better. They are the *επιχωριον τι* of a work so thoroughly national. For why should a Scotsman, who is ashamed of nothing else belonging to his country, be ashamed of its dialect? It is to English what the Doric was to pure Greek, adorned with many rustic graces which have long been felt and acknowledged in the poetry of that country. Why then should it not be tolerated in history, especially since experience has shown that no efforts of their best writers have been able wholly to avoid it.”

The conductors of the Quarterly could not be expected to sympathize in ecclesiastical sentiment, either with the stern reforming presbyter of the

north, or with his biographer. To both they awarded a tribute of praise equally ample and discriminating; but while full credit was given to the author for candour and research, in the statement of facts, they severely condemned the principles on which he vindicated some of the most questionable actions of the Reformers, and took an opportunity of testifying towards the Presbyterians of a later period, "Henderson, Gillespie, and their brethren of the covenant," those feelings of contempt which they had been induced to forego, or to qualify, in regard to Knox and his contemporaries. These animadversions do not appear to have much affected our author. "Knox," he says to his former correspondent, "has now passed through the ordeal of the London Quarterly Review, the antipode of the Edinburgh. He is treated with wonderful lenity and favour. A strong attack, however, is made on the principles advanced respecting the assassination of Cardinal Beaton. When you write to Mr. M., you may tell him that lawyers differ as well as doctors. He thinks that I breathe a different spirit from that of Knox; the Quarterly gentlemen, on the contrary, say that if I had 'been alive in the 16th century, there would not have been so much heard of Willock or Rowe, as of M'Crie, as a coadjutor to Knox'—and that 'he would have given his vote as cheerfully as his hero to bring the adulteress and murderess to the block,' or words to that purpose.\* Is not that great praise?"

His friend, Dr. Andrew Thomson, however, was not

\* "But of the literal subversion of many noble buildings, which, perhaps unavoidably, took place in the course of this great revolution, Dr. M'Crie permits himself to speak with a savage and sarcastic triumph, which evinces how zealous and practical a helper he would himself have proved in the work of destruction, had he been born in the 16th century. Less, we are persuaded, would then have been heard of Rowe or Willock, as auxiliaries of Knox, than of M'Crie."—"Like Knox himself, he has neither a tear nor a sigh for Mary, and we doubt not that like him he would have voted to bring the royal adulteress and murderer, for such they both esteem her, to the block."—*Quarterly Review*, vol. ix., p. 421, 427.



willing to allow the English critics to escape so easily. Not contented with having inserted a long and highly commendatory review of the Life of Knox in the Christian Instructor, he published two elaborate papers in the same periodical, in reply to the strictures of the Quarterly Reviewers. Many of my readers will recollect how heartily he improved the advantage which the English critics, in their ignorance of Scotland and its history, had afforded him, and with what nerve he repelled their attack on the Presbyterians. There is reason to think, that for many of the facts which he adduces in these pungent articles, he was indebted to the author of Knox; but if we may thus account for the number and weight of the thongs with which the scourge was armed, it is equally impossible to mistake the peculiar tact and vigour of the hand by which it was wielded.

Among the other periodicals of the day in which Knox was reviewed more or less favourably, I might mention the British Critic, the Scottish Review, and the Christian Observer. The British Critic for October, November and December 1813, forms, I believe, the solitary exception to the uniform courtesy and respect with which the author was treated by the literary journals. His work having fallen into the hands of some devoted admirer of the divine right of Episcopacy, he was accused by the Reviewer, in no equivocal terms, of having garbled his facts, those especially which relate to the substantial harmony between the early Reformers in England and the Scottish and other Reformed Churches, on ecclesiastical polity. All that Dr. M'Crie had done to elucidate the history of the period could not atone, at this critic's tribunal, for the crime of having proved, to the satisfaction of all reasonable men, that the superintendents were not bishops; and having ventured to question the doctrine, that the want of Episcopal ordination necessarily invalidates and nullifies the orders of all the Reformed Churches, except the English! These characteristics, together with the

tone of asperity in which the articles were written, differing so widely from the liberal and courteous spirit of the Quarterly Review, and so unwarranted by any ostensible cause of provocation,—the extreme views held by the writer on the point of apostolical succession, which had then few supporters of any name in England,—and, above all, the character of the authorities quoted against the author of the *Life*, and the dogged reliance placed upon them, to the exclusion of all others by whom they have been repeatedly disproved,—were considered, at the time, amply sufficient indications that the review came from the pen of a Scottish Episcopalian.

The established reputation which the *Life of Knox* has acquired in the literary and religious world, might serve as an apology for not entering farther here into the merits of the work; but there are certain points which, as reflecting light on the character and sentiments of the author, seem to come, almost necessarily, within the province of his biographer. Indeed, the character of the author is the key to the real character of the work; and, owing to ignorance of this, or want of sympathy with him in the high objects which he proposed to himself in the undertaking, there is some reason to believe, that, with all the fame which the *Life of Knox* has acquired, its peculiar merits are not, even yet, distinctly and discriminatively appreciated by many of its admirers.

On the importance of the *subject* of the work—the Reformation from Popery—to which the *Life of Knox* is so clearly made subservient, and which was unquestionably the prevailing object of regard in the author's own mind, it is needless to enlarge. Let it suffice to say, that this grand religious revolution must be estimated, not merely by the numerous abuses which it removed from the Church, but chiefly by its relation to the primitive institute of Scriptural Christianity,—the Bible, which it restored to the Church for entire possession and free circulation, and reinstated in its sovereignty, to regulate the faith and

the practice of men; that the wonders which it wrought in the days of its power were accomplished mainly by the preaching and application of the divine oracles; and that to the revival of the pure doctrines of the Gospel, we must trace the overthrow of that system of complicated iniquity, by which they had been so long rendered nugatory for the good of mankind. By its conformity to that lofty standard, must its appropriate excellence be measured, and by its bearings on the higher interests of man, as formed for immortality, must its importance be estimated and felt. The subject of the Reformation thus assumes a magnitude far beyond the annals of art or science, or the ordinary transactions of society, civil or military; and its history, though worthy of occupying all the talents of the scholar and the politician, must, in order to be known as it ought, be studied from higher motives than the gratification of an antiquarian or literary curiosity.

Those only who have paid attention to the state of ecclesiastical history at the time when the *Life of Knox* appeared, can duly appreciate the seasonableness of such a work. Since that period, so vast is the accession that has been made to our historical knowledge, so much has been written on the Reformation, so familiar have we become with its facts, which have been made even to minister to our entertainment in works of fiction, that few in the present generation can conceive how much we needed, at that time, a suitable, adequate and friendly exhibition of the days of John Knox. The authentic records of the period, hid in manuscripts, or detailed in the antiquated and ungainly style of a past age, had become utterly unavailable for the purposes of general instruction and excitement. In the country at large, an infidel spirit was abroad, at open variance with the principles of the Reformation. Literature and liberty had, for the first time in Scotland, joined hands with irreligion and profaneness. The religious public, strangers to the trials of their fathers, had become

estranged from their history, and, as the usual consequence, not only unthankful for what they had done, but vain of their own fancied superiority. A work was wanted, in which the ancient cause, with the ancient spirit of the Reformation, might come recommended by the advantages of modern taste and refinement. And nothing promised more effectually to restore the fading energies of the Presbyterian Church, than to carry her back, once more, to the bracing air and the heart-stirring scenery of her infant years.

In calculating the amount of service performed to the public by the *Life of Knox*, it seems requisite to advert to the character of the popular history of the period,—the whole current of which may be said to have been either decidedly hostile or coldly indifferent to the cause of vital religion and reformation. The memory of the reformers, though still venerated by the few, who, adhering to their principles, had studied their history in the humble pages of such as Wodrow, Howie, Crookshank, and Stevenson, still lay under a load of reproach, which, with the bulk of the reading public, had long passed for the language of soberness and truth.\* Popish writers had propagated every prejudice and falsehood against them, and distorted and vilified every thing connected with a revolution, which interest, ignorance, and superstition taught them to abhor. Recent events in the British kingdoms had alienated the minds of our courtly divines from the true principles of the Reformation, and rendered them too willing to join in

\* "The prevailing opinion about John Knox," says one who was well qualified to judge of the matter, "has come to be, that he was a fierce and gloomy bigot, equally a foe to polite learning and innocent enjoyment; and that, not satisfied with exposing the abuses of the Romish superstition, he laboured to substitute for the rational religion and regulated worship of enlightened men, the ardent and unrectified spirit of vulgar enthusiasm, dashed with dreams of spiritual and political independence, and all the impracticabilities of the earthly kingdom of the saints."—*Edinburgh Review*. July 1812.

the outcry against our Reformers. The skeptical pen of Hume, at that time the idol of historic taste, and who was always glad of an opportunity to aim a blow at genuine religion, in whatever form it appeared, had but too well fulfilled the pledge which he gave in a letter to Principal Robertson: "Tell Goodall, that if he can but give up Queen Mary, I hope to satisfy him in every thing else, and he will have the pleasure of seeing John Knox and the Reformers made very ridiculous."\*

It would be uncandid and unjust to place the elegant histories of Robertson on a level, in point of moral feeling, with that of Hume. But, making every allowance for the professedly secular character of his works, it must be admitted that, when he does touch on the subject, there is no indication of a desire to do full justice to the character of the Reformation. In his *History of Scotland*, which Dr. M'Crie used to say was "the most beautiful piece of history he ever read," there are many fine and finely expressed sentiments in honour of learning, liberty and religion; but the feelings of his readers will tell them, that in so far as they have been guided by the historian, he has been more successful in exciting a sentimental sympathy for his unfortunate and guilty heroine, than in kindling a zeal for the Reformation, or any thing like admiration for the devoted men by whom it was accomplished. His eloquent biographer has suggested the following apology for the failings into which he has been betrayed by making Mary the heroine of his story:—"A cold and phlegmatic historian, who surveys human affairs like the inhabitant of a different planet, if his narrative should sometimes languish for want of interest, will at least avoid those prepossessions into which the writer must occasionally be betrayed, who, mingling with a sympathetic ardour among the illustrious personages whose story he contemplates, is liable, while he kindles with their emo-

\* Stewart's *Life of Robertson*, p. 37.

tions, to be infected with the contagion of their prejudices and passions." Granted: but there were two classes of "illustrious personages" among whom the Principal was led by his story to mingle; and it must be left with the reader to judge, how far the "prejudices and passions" inspired by contemplating the feminine accomplishments of the Queen of Scots, deserve to be classed with those which might have sprung from sympathy with the manly worth and high-toned principle of the Scottish Reformers. "The History of Scotland," says our author, "has done more to prepossess the public mind in favour of that princess, than all the defences of her most zealous and ingenious advocates, and consequently to excite prejudice against her opponents, who, on the supposition of her guilt, acted a most meritorious part, and are entitled, in other respects, to the gratitude and veneration of posterity."\*

If this exquisitely pleasing historian yielded too far, in portraying the character of Mary, to the amiable feelings of the man, there can be as little doubt that his habits and ecclesiastical leanings (not to speak of his religious views, or to decide whether he valued religion itself at its true worth) tempted him to regard the struggles for religious freedom at the Reformation, in the cold light of the coldest church policy. It is seldom that he suggests an advice for the advancement of reforming measures; but a favourite speculation with him seems to have been the problem, how the whole Reformation might have been prevented, or overthrown.† With the religious sentiments of the Reformers, he is careful

\* Life of Knox, vol. ii., p. 248—9.

† There is a passage in his History of Charles V. in which he reveals the secret, which neither Charles nor his counsellors, lay or clerical, could discover, and which, according to the sage historian, would have extinguished the Reformation abroad. Suggestions in the same strain are to be met with in the history of Scotland. "Perhaps by *gentle treatment*, and *artful policy*, the progress of the Reformation might have been checked, &c.—Vol. i., b. 2.

on all occasions not to identify himself. He represents them as contending "for what *they esteemed* the cause of God and of their country," or against "what *they denounced* as idolatry,"—speaking, on all points of faith, really "like the inhabitant of a different planet." In accounting for the Reformation, he dwells exclusively on the political motives of the actors, expressly to "show how naturally these prompted them to act with so much ardour," and to avoid assigning any higher reasons for the "eagerness and zeal with which our ancestors embraced and propagated the Protestant doctrines," which, he says, would represent the Reformation "as the effect of some wild and enthusiastic frenzy in the human mind."\* In short, he finds so many natural causes working to produce the effect, that, though a Providence is verbally acknowledged, the admission is felt to be almost superfluous. Instead of tracing the connexion between the great efficient and the subordinate agency, so as to make it manifest that while men and things were at work, God was working out, by means of them, his sovereign will, and guiding, though unseen, the springs of human action,—he puts down Providence in a niche by itself, contented, as it were, with having paid his respects to the image at the door, and thereby exhausted his duty and saved his orthodoxy. So that by the time the historian has conducted his company a few steps through the aisles and galleries of his edifice, they feel themselves as much in a region from whence all influence superior to that which meets the senses is excluded, as if their guide had been Gibbon or Hume, instead of a Scottish divine, and a professed Calvinist.

By one of those remarkable coincidences which frequently happen in the history of literature, the same year witnessed the publication of the *Life of Knox*, and of *Dr. Cook's History of the Reformation* in Scotland, the latter having the precedence by a

\* *History of Scotland*, vol. i., b. 2.

few weeks. To this work Dr. M'Crie thus referred, in his Preface to the first edition of Knox:—"When the printing of the following Life was finished, and I was employed in correcting the Notes at the end, a *History of the Reformation in Scotland*, by Dr. Cook of Laurencekirk, was published. After what I have already said, I need scarcely add, that the appearance of such a work gave me great satisfaction. The author is a friend to civil and religious liberty; he has done justice to the character of the Reformers, and evinced much industry in examining the authorities from which he has taken his materials. Had he had more full access to the sources of information, he would no doubt have done greater justice to the subject, and rendered his work still more worthy of public favour; but I trust that it will be useful in correcting mistakes and prejudices which are extremely common, and in exciting attention to a branch of our national history which has been long neglected. Where our subject coincides, I have in general observed an agreement in the narrative, and sometimes in the reflections: in several instances, however, we differ in the judgment which we have expressed about them, and in the delineation of character. The judicious reader will decide on which side the truth lies, by comparing the reasons which we have advanced, and the authorities to which we have appealed."

Full time has now been given to the public to decide on the point submitted to their judgment at the close of this candid estimate of a rival work, and it would savour of affectation were we to pretend to question on which side the verdict has been given. Without, however, pronouncing on their respective merits, which, of course, will be estimated according to the views entertained of their grand subject, the interests of truth demand a fair disclosure of the principal points referred to, which form the characteristic features of distinction between the two works. In the pages of Dr. Cook we discover the



same neutrality of feeling, and looseness of sentiment, with respect to many important branches of the Reformation, which we have already noticed as characterizing those of Dr. Robertson. In Dr. Cook, however, there is an unsteadiness of judgment, not discernible in the learned Prineipal. Single passages we read with satisfaction, but their influence is weakened by others which are found in juxtaposition to them. He is perpetually diluting his statements with qualifications which unsettle the verdict he had previously pronounced, and destroy the impression he had well nigh produced. The prevailing topic is the subjection of the Church to the State, and in almost every question between the two, his voice is in favour of the latter. There is hardly any one point that good men have suffered or struggled for, which appears to him of sufficient importance to justify a struggle or a suffering on account of it. In several instances (we might specify his depreciating strictures on Regent Murray) he not only advances positions which contradict all credible history, but by a kind of self-cross-questioning destroys his own testimony. So frequently and provokingly indeed does he interpose his caveats and innuendoes, that we are almost tempted to impute to him the intention of neutralizing all the effect of the good words which he has bestowed on the Reformers and the Reformation. In the omnipotent influence he ascribes to secondary causes—in his *relucence* on the peculiar doctrinal sentiments of the Reformers, which were certainly the mainsprings of their ardour in acting and fortitude in suffering, but which he alleges, referred to “dark and disputable subjects”—in his professed latitude of opinion in regard to church polity, though obvious leaning of inclination towards Episcopacy—in his faltering tone as soon as he comes to apply the principles which he lays down on civil and religious liberty—as if “scared at the sound himself had made”—and in his frequent use of the timorous and temporizing argument of dangerous consequen-

ces;—there is ample evidence, that whatever may have been Dr. Cook's own opinion of the work or of the men described in his history, his was certainly not the exhibition of them, calculated to leave on the mind the most favourable impressions of either, or destined to rekindle the spirit by which they purified the Church and saved the country.

In hazarding these remarks, I am not conscious of being guided by any other motive than a desire to show, that, on the assumption that the Reformation and its heroes deserved to be treated in another spirit, and presented in another light than they were in the pages of the writers now referred to, such a work as the Life of Knox was loudly and imperatively called for. It is not my intention to enter into an analysis of its contents. To specify the pieces of collateral information which the author has collected, and the various controverted points of history which have been settled or illustrated in the course of the narrative, would be to step beyond the province of the biographer. I may be permitted, however, to refer to a characteristic feature of the work—which it necessarily assumed in the hands of the author—its apologetical character. The success, indeed, with which “Knox and his Reformation” have been vindicated, has been generally reckoned his highest praise. One of its reviewers has remarked, that had it “contained nothing more than an expansion of the notes, with the passages in the text to which these notes refer, in regard to the real character of “The Good Regent,” so unjustly yet so uniformly aspersed, even by the most accurate and distinguished historians, we should have pronounced it to be a work *dignum cedro linendum*.”\* In the execution of this part of his task, the author has frequent recourse to what Dr. Thomson called “the retort courteous,” seldom permitting his opponents to escape without proving them guilty of faults much graver than those of which they accused the Reform-

\* Christian Instructor, vol. iv., p. 138.

ers; and it is here that he betrays that power of sarcasm which gave such serious offence to some of his critics. But while it must be admitted that the provocation was great, it will be found that the severest of his strictures proceeded more from genuine indignation at the offence, than from a desire to retaliate on the offender; and that the object of them was chiefly to unveil the unworthy spirit which animated, as it still continues to animate, the more clamorous and prejudiced assailants of our Presbyterian ancestors.\* I may be permitted to add, that the manner in which the author has accomplished his task is sufficient to show, what is now beginning to be more generally acknowledged, that the warmest enthusiasm in the cause of divine truth, and sympathy with the noble and upright spirits who contended for it, are not incompatible with the utmost candour in delineating their character and recording their history; and that historical impartiality is a very different thing from that Pyrrhonism and Stoical indifference, with which it was too long confounded, but which really disqualifies the historian for doing any proper justice to his subject.

Whatever may be thought of the tone and spirit of the historian, there can be but one opinion as to the accuracy and fidelity of the narrative. On this there is the less reason to enlarge, as the author has enabled every reader to judge for himself, his work exhibiting, to use the phrasology of Johnson, "such a stability of dates, such a certainty of facts, such a punctuality of citation." With all his contempt for mere literary antiquaries, few of that class, it is believed, were ever more patient and curious in re-

\* Among the most striking examples of the use made of this legitimate weapon of literary warfare, we might refer to his remarks on the assassination of Cardinal Beaton, (vol. i., note M, 5th, ed.): his vindication of Knox from the charge of treason, (ib. p. 153, note W.); his apology for the violence of "The First Blast against the monstrous Regiment of Women," (ib. p. 225.); his remarks on the demolition of the monasteries, (ib. p. 274.); and on Knox's dissimulation, (ib. p. 292.)

search, or more resolute against taking things at second hand. It would not become me to inquire how far the plodding perseverance usually attributed to the lower creation in the world of literature, was found united in him with the descriptive powers of the historian, and the generalized wisdom of the philosopher. But if one may venture on describing his manner in a few words, it might be said, that he explains events, not so much by philosophizing on their probable causes, as by a careful induction of facts; and that he produces his effect, less by the embellishments of description than by the grouping of his figures, and by such a graphic delineation of character, that in whatever light the picture is viewed, it catches the eye, and conveys the impression of reality.\*

But whatever may be the rank due to the Life of Knox as an historical composition, it is as a religious work, and as a history of the Reformation, that it will continue to hold its highest place in the estimation of all the enlightened friends of religion. The felicity of the selection of John Knox as the subject of a popular biography has been frequently noticed, and the narrative doubtless derives many charms

\* While he was composing the Life of Knox, a friend found him seated, as usual, with a huge mass of books and manuscripts before him. "I positively shudder to look at them," he said to the gentleman, who was expressing his astonishment at their number. Ample evidence of the use which he had made of this formidable heap of authorities is discernible in the notes and references with which the volumes abound, and which he himself considered as, in some respects, the most valuable portion of the work. A fond admirer of the Life, who has been at the pains of counting them, makes out 161 authorities, more or less quoted. A better idea of their value may be formed, when it is known that there is no attempt to swell the number, by stringing a long list of names to authenticate facts which were never disputed. He has been heard to mention, that, having forgotten where he had met with the fact mentioned (vol. i, p. 15) respecting Gawin Douglas, of his storming the cathedral of Dunkeld, it cost him a *six weeks' search* before he discovered his authority. As the reward of his labour, he was enabled to add to the note, in the second edition, "Life of Gawin Douglas, prefixed to his translation of the Æneid; Ruddiman's Edition."

from the incidents of his personal history; but it requires little penetration to discover, that the description of the Reformer, though he is the main figure in the piece, was not the main design of the painter; and that Knox is made subservient in the pages of his biographer, as he was during life in the hands of Providence, to the illustration and defence of the cause, of which he was the chief pillar and the central spirit. The evangelical character of the work is very apparent. In these pages, religion appears, as it really was at the time of the Reformation, the absorbing interest, the pervading principle, without the aid of which that wonderful revolution would never have been effected, but would assuredly, in every struggle which it encountered, have been defeated. The God-fearing character of the principal actors in the scene, as portrayed by the author, contributes, more powerfully, perhaps, than any thing else, to the influence of the whole work; and the events which he describes, are hallowed by being traced, in their commencement, progress and success, to the overruling and directing hand of Providence. But the aims of the author were still more specific. To record the deliverance of the Church from Popish thralldom, and the settlement of religion on the basis of a large and liberal but faithful profession,—to revive respect for the solemn federal transactions by which it was confirmed,—to assert the independence of the Church, in the way of showing how this may be maintained compatibly with a civil establishment, which shall recognise her profession, and support her institutions, without demanding in return the sacrifice of a single spiritual right belonging to her as a Church of Christ,—and to rouse the Church of Scotland, in particular, to return to her “first love,” and to purify her constitution and administration from every abuse inconsistent with her efficiency as a Christian establishment;—these were the great ends which Dr. M'Crie had in view in writing the Life of Knox. And if any reader has risen from its perusal, with no other

impressions than those of admiration for the powers of the author, and general respect for the piety and zeal of the Reformers,—if he has laid down the two volumes, without being convinced that the work which they illustrate was, in spite of all the failings of the instruments employed in it, the work of God, and fully justified in the great means by which it was carried on and ratified, by reason and Scripture,—I hesitate not to affirm, that, so far as such a reader is concerned, the main design of the author, for which all his time and labour were expended, has completely failed.

The following expression of his own feelings on this important point, occurs in a letter to one of his brethren, June 30th, 1818: “I believe that many are of the same opinion with you, and think that I am wholly occupied in writing for the press, and that, influenced by the approbation which my former work obtained, I am labouring continually in preparing another which may have equal success. There are parts of my conduct, I confess, which afford occasion for such apprehensions. But, believe me, it is quite otherwise. For whole years I have not done as much as I could have done in the same number of months, I may say weeks, if I had entered heartily into the work. For the last half year I have scarcely looked at the *Life of Melville*. The truth is, I am sick of the public—I am disgusted at it—I loathe the manner in which it breathes cold and hot on the same subject—and I would not, could not live in its atmosphere. It is long since I perceived that the favour which it testified for Knox was superficial, hollow, and treacherous. How, indeed, could such an age really or sincerely venerate his character, and sympathize with his principles or his feelings, which are at such variance with all its own? And what signify professions which are daily contradicted by practice?—But I will not dwell on this theme. You will easily see the state of my mind.”

It was no doubt under the influence of such feelings that he manifested less interest, than he might

otherwise have done, in the public demonstrations of admiration for the memory of Knox which his labours had so great a share in eliciting.\* But it is hardly necessary to add, that he lived to see reason for qualifying, to a considerable extent, the gloomy estimate which he appears to have formed, at the time, of the impression made by his work on the public mind. It was no small triumph to achieve for the cause of truth, that the name of John Knox, formerly so odious, soon became nearly as popular as it was in the lifetime of the Reformer; and that the painter, the sculptor, and the poet should have vied to embody the description of the biographer, and commemorate the deeds of his hero.† It required some time before the wholesome influences of such a work could find their way into such a system of society, but the change which it has already produced on public

\* Feelings of delicacy may have mingled with other motives in preventing him from countenancing the splendid ceremonies which attended the laying of the foundation of Knox's monument in Glasgow, in 1825.

† By none have the merits of the *Life of Knox* been more highly appreciated than by the Presbyterians of Ireland. In illustration of the above, I may quote the following testimony from one of their papers, which appeared after a visit which Dr. M'Crie paid to Ireland in 1826. "This distinguished writer sailed from Belfast for Scotland yesterday. In the present literary age, when one can scarcely turn the corner of a street without running himself against an author, men who have actually done great things are still few in number. One of these benefactors of mankind is Dr. M'Crie. The publication of his first great work, "*The Life of John Knox*," forms an important era in the progress of historical science. It is so well known, that any remarks on it would be useless, but we may be permitted to advert to the effects which it has produced." Having adverted to some of these, the writer adds, "But a greater proof of his merit was the complete revolution in public opinion which was produced by the work. All the English periodicals, except one or two which were governed by the demon of party, were filled with recantations of the error which had prevailed in that part of the empire concerning the character of the deliverer of Scotland; and his own country, which had so long been misled by her own recreant sons concerning the character and achievements of Knox, hastened to do him justice. Monuments were erected, and clubs were instituted to his memory, and his name was enrolled in the list of her patriots with those of Bruce and Wallace."—*Belfast News Letter*.

sentiment, though not all that he could have wished, is certainly much greater than he ever anticipated. On the Church of Scotland, its effects may be visibly traced in her increased and increasing respect for the principles as well as the persons of her early Reformers, and the anxiety evinced for the removal of corruptions which time and a long course of bad regimen has superinduced on her natively good constitution, and the real extent and deformity of which, though often pointed out to her, in the form of testimony, by her faithful friends, she was slow to acknowledge, till presented with this lively portrait of what she was in the days of her prime. It is not for us to prognosticate what may be the remoter consequences of this work, aided by the other productions of the author; he himself did not look for any prevailing change of opinion in the country, unless in connexion with some change in providence, which should attract general attention to the subject, and remove deeply-rooted prejudices. But should the present movements of society, and the current of religious feeling now setting so strongly in, issue in the return of the national Church to all the purity and more than the efficiency of her earlier days, few publications, it is believed, will be found to have contributed more largely to bring about such a happy consummation than the *Life of Knox*.

The second edition appeared in March 1813, in two volumes, with many alterations and additions. Indeed, the improvements made on the style, in which he showed his readiness to avail himself of the candid suggestions of the critics, and enlarged accounts given of public transactions, the expansion of the reflections, together with the additional authorities adduced, in this edition, render it, in point of value, as it was in point of labour, almost a new work. The *Life of Knox* has now reached the sixth edition. It has been translated into the French, Dutch and German languages. The Dutch translation, which was executed by Cramer von Baumgarten, was printed at



Groningen, in 1817, in two volumes octavo. The German version, which is rather an abridgment or largely extended extract from the work, by the celebrated Plank of Gottingen, was published the same year in one volume duodecimo; and in this cheap form it has circulated very widely in Germany among the common people.

In February 1813, before the publication of the second edition, Mr. M'Crie received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from the University of Edinburgh, a circumstance the more remarkable, as that body has been considered scrupulous in bestowing academical honours, and as this was the first instance in which they had ever conferred such a degree on any dissenting minister in Scotland. The following communication will show the interest which Mr. Blackwood took in procuring him this mark of distinction, and discovers that a proposal had been made to procure for him the same honour from the University of St. Andrews.

To the Rev. Dr. Lee, St. Andrews.

“MY DEAR SIR,—Your truly liberal and most flattering offer for my worthy friend Mr. M'Crie, I never can forget, and must consider as a fresh mark of your regard to myself, as I feel so deeply interested in whatever concerns the fame or character of the Author of the Life of Knox. Some time ago, I had a good deal of conversation with some of my friends in the University here on the subject, in consequence of which Dr. Baird, Dr. Ritchie, and several other of the Professors were applied to, and professed the utmost readiness about bringing forward or supporting a proposal to confer a degree on one who they all thought had so well deserved it. This being the state of the case, you will see that as my friends here have been stirred in the business already, it would not be using them well to accept of your offer, which I consider as so extremely handsome that it gives me great pain it cannot be accepted of at present.

Mr. M'Cric has not the smallest suspicion that such an affair is in agitation. He is so very modest a man, that I know he would have rather been for declining such an honour, if I had consulted him previously about it. I intend to pay the whole of the fees out of my own pocket, without letting him know any thing about it.—I am, my dear Sir, your sincere friend,  
 “W. BLACKWOOD.”

EDINBURGH, 23d Dec. 1812.

The degree was readily obtained, but the difficulty lay in inducing him to accept of it. He regarded it, I believe, as somewhat inconsistent with Presbyterian parity, and so averse was he to the appropriation of the title, that it required all the art and perseverance of his spirited publisher to get the honorary initials inserted after his name in the second edition of Knox. In course of time he became more reconciled to the customary form of address; but to the last he strenuously refused to allow himself to be designated Doctor in the proceedings of the Church Courts.

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## CHAPTER V.

FROM THE PUBLICATION OF THE LIFE OF KNOX TO  
 THAT OF THE LIFE OF MELVILLE.

1813—1821.

WE now approach a period in the history of Dr. M'Cric when he began to emerge from the comparative obscurity in which he had spent his earlier days. Strictly domestic in his habits, he was never fond, at any time of his life, of appearing much in public, or mingling with the world; and the publicity which his name acquired from the Life of Knox, produced no visible change in his disposition. At the time of which we now write, he was decidedly more recluse in his habits than he was in the latter years of his life.

He confined himself closely to his room, prosecuting his literary labours, when not engaged in pastoral duties, throughout the day, and too often throughout the night, to a late hour of the following morning. These intense studies, aided no doubt by the public trials through which he had passed, had superinduced a degree of thoughtfulness and gravity on his character, which, though it never extinguished his native cheerfulness and urbanity, may have sometimes assumed the appearance of reserve, if not of sternness, inspiring some with a species of awe in his presence. This, however, arose, not from a constitutional predominance of melancholy over happier feelings, but from temporary circumstances, which had the power to stir up, occasionally, the deep fountain of his sensibilities, and the saddening effects of which had totally disappeared, long before any of his later acquaintance came to know him.

His aversion to all public exhibitions went far to prevent him from taking a prominent part in the religious associations, which sprung up in such abundance during the early part of the present century. In some of them, such as missionary societies, he felt himself precluded from taking any share, in consequence of the mixed and anomalous character of their constitution. While he approved of their general object, and sympathized in the zeal manifested for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, he considered himself shut up, by his peculiar profession, from cooperating, in proceedings which he viewed as the proper business of the Church, with a variety of other denominations, against whom he was testifying, and with whom he could not associate in other acts of ecclesiastical administration. His views on the general question of duty are thus expressed to one of his correspondents:—"In stating this topic, you seem fully aware of those considerations, which are sufficient for satisfying the judgment and directing the conscience, though they may often leave the feelings in a state of pain. Unless we adopt the maxim,

‘Let us do evil that good may come,’ we must circumscribe our exertions in attempting to do good, and decline to join with some who are thus employed, and of whose actions and motives we willingly believe the best. The ways of Providence are wonderful. Have you not been struck with what I may call the *division of labour* among the instruments employed in the accomplishment of the great work which God is carrying on in the moral and religious world? He has permitted, and he has purposes to serve by all the disorders, divisions, &c., in the Church; and he has work—and good work—to perform in societies and connexions to which neither you nor I could conscientiously and dutifully accede. We ought to adore him in this, and not to suffer our minds to be either stumbled or grieved at his procedure. He marks out the sphere of our activity in doing his revealed will, and enlarges or narrows our opportunities of doing good as it pleases him. My sphere has been as much contracted as yours is ever like to be; and yet I have always found that my opportunities have been greater than my improvement of them. And when one door is shut, He can open another. But although he should shut the door altogether, and we should be precluded from every opportunity of being publicly useful consistently with a good conscience, would it not be our duty to acquiesce—to be ‘dumb with silence and refrain our mouth even from good?’ May there not be a silent testimony which is as glorifying to God, in certain circumstances, and as edifying to men, as the loudest voice and the most active exertions? ‘He, being dead, yet speaketh.’”

With regard to the subject of missions, his views tended to the conclusion that the Church, in her judicial capacity, is the true Missionary Society; that to her alone belongs the duty of examining the qualifications of the Gospel missionaries, appointing them their respective spheres, sending them forth on their mission, and superintending their personal and ministerial conduct; and that every other plan of operation,

differing from this, was in so far an encroachment on the proper business of the courts of Christ's house, tending to perpetuate divisions, and carrying in the very principle of their association, the seeds of their own dissolution.

But though thus withheld from actively co-operating with some of the more popular religious enterprises of the day, he took a lively interest in those of them which involved no compromise of his peculiar principles. Among these, we may notice particularly the Gaelic School Society, of which he was one of the founders. The following extract from a Minute of the Directors of that Society, agreed to shortly after his decease, will show the high esteem in which his services were held:—"As one of those who first entertained and gave body to the idea of an association for communicating the Word of God and religious instruction to the Highlanders in their native tongue, Dr. M'Crie lived to see the wisdom and utility of the plan proved by experience; and whilst he was one of the original founders of the institution, he continued to the close of his life one of its liberal supporters, and where occasion required the employment of his eminent talents and persuasive eloquence, one of its most effective advocates. Frequently, during the period of nearly twenty-five years, he served as one of its directors, and uniformly, by the wisdom of his counsel, the urbanity and cheerfulness of his disposition, his close attention to its business, and his upright and unbending principle, contributed eminently to the harmony and efficiency of the committee and the great interests of the Society; whilst his enlightened and energetic co-operation in every Christian and patriotic object which he deemed it his duty or could find time to patronise, will long be remembered by his associates in Edinburgh."

Were any other proof necessary to show how far he was from being actuated by a spirit of sectarian jealousy, in standing aloof from some religious societies, I might refer to the high eulogium which he

pronounced on the character of Dr. Charles Stuart of Dunearn,—a gentleman with whom he co-operated in the formation of the Gaelic School Society, and with whom, though the doctor was a very zealous Baptist, he continued to live on terms of the kindest Christian intercourse.\* “Of his character,” said Dr. M’Crie, at the first meeting of that Society after his death, January 29, 1827, “I shall say nothing but what has fallen within my own observation. Owing to disparity of years, and other circumstances which need not be mentioned here, I did not enjoy his friendship in the strictest sense of that word; but I had the honour and happiness of an intimate acquaintance with him during a considerable number of years, and flatter myself that I had some share of his confidence. I have spent many pleasant, and, I hope, not altogether useless hours in his company; and I am sure my memory does not deceive me when I say, that I do not recollect of a single unkind or unpleasant feeling being excited during the period of our intercourse, though we have walked occasionally over debatable ground, and differed on points which neither of us regarded as trivial and unimportant. For permit me to say, Sir, that it is no test of forbearance for persons to agree in differing about sentiments which both, or even one of them holds as of little or no moment, which he can quit with as much ease as he leaves furnished lodgings, or change as one changes his dress, to go to a masquerade or a funeral. In Dr. Stuart I always found the honourable feelings of the gentleman, the refined and liberal thinking of the scholar, and the unaffected and humble piety of the Christian.”†

In March 1813, he was invited to attend a public

\* Dr. Stuart used to be a very regular hearer of Dr. M’Crie’s lectures; and, as regularly, if a child was to be baptized, he took up his hat at the close of the lecture, and walked out of the church

† Sixteenth Annual Report of the Society for the Support of Gaelic Schools, January 29, 1827, p. 33. For the speech from which the above is taken, see Appendix.

meeting, at which the Lord Provost presided, and which was called by an advertisement signed by ministers of all denominations, to deliberate on the steps proper to be taken in the event of the renewal of the East India Company's Charter, so far as this concerned the promotion of Christianity in that country. The chief object of the meeting was to petition Parliament "to provide for the introduction of ministers and teachers of the different persuasions of Protestant *Dissenters* into that vast continent, for the purpose of instructing the natives in the doctrines of Christianity,"\* without being subjected to those obstructions which had formerly been thrown in their way; in other words, that the law of toleration in this country should be extended to our foreign dominions, so as to allow dissenters from the Church of England liberty of worship. After consulting his friend Mr. Bruce, who was then engaged in preparing a pamphlet on the East India question, he resolved to attend; and in the following extract he gives a minute and humorous account of his first appearance at a public meeting:—

"On Monday last I attended a meeting where I was not altogether a silent spectator—the meeting of the inhabitants about the Christianizing of India, of which you will have seen an account. The designations of those who called it will give you some idea of its complexion—Episcopalians, Presbyterians, established and dissenting, Burghers and Antiburghers, Relief and Baptists. I refused to join in calling a meeting of such a description, and had once resolved not to go near it, as I knew that no specific or satisfactory measure could be expected from such a combination. However, on second thoughts, I prevailed on myself to go, having exoneration alone in the eye of my expectation. The resolutions and the petition were just what I expected, and met with unanimous consent and approbation. Before they were formally agreed to, I craved liberty to state briefly my reasons

\* Caledonian Mercury, April 1, 1813.

for not being able to concur in them. As soon as I stood and said *My Lord!* (the first time the words were ever uttered by me) ——— stretched himself six inches, ——— rubbed his spectacles, and ——— literally came forward four seats in order to hear me the better, expecting that I would *black* myself for ever by a philippic against toleration; but he had forgot that I was now a Doctor as well as he, that I could feel the pulse of my patient, and mix up my dose with a little art as well as he could do. In short, I waved the question of toleration. (Observe if your father's face is getting long while you read this to him.)\*

“Seriously, however, I told the meeting that I could not concur in any such vague and loose measure,—one which I was sure the government would not grant, and could not grant even with safety to the state, in such a country as India; that if the means of religious instruction were to be communicated to British subjects resident in that country, and to the natives, some regular plan ought to be adopted, and the matter not left to individual and detached exertions, if any permanent or extensive effects were expected; that government was about to make some provision of this kind, and a clause was to be introduced into the new bill which amounted to an exclusive establishment of the Episcopal Church there; *that the Presbyterian Church of Scotland was equally entitled to a share of legal countenance and support in that part of the empire*; that the people of this country were called to declare their sentiments on this head, and that if petitions went from Scotland (now when the outlines of the bill were known) claiming merely liberty to Protestants of all descriptions to send out teachers, it must imply an acquiescence in the exclusive establishment of the Episcopal Church in India. At the same time, I signified, that I did not make

\* He was accustomed to banter Mr. Aitken of Kirriemuir on entertaining what he considered rather rigid notions on the question of toleration.



any proposition on this head, as I was sensible, from the complexion of the meeting, and the view with which they had been called together, that they could not be expected to adopt it; but I hoped that the ministers and people of the Establishment, and dissenting bodies who adhered to the standards of the Church of Scotland, would not be inattentive to the subject, in which they were all interested, and would not allow the opportunity of declaring their sentiments to slip.—I have learnt since, that several persons present are now sensible that the business was too hastily conducted, and that, had they not considered themselves as pledged by previous agreement, &c., they would have followed a different plan of procedure. But I have no expectation that, after what has taken place, any farther attempt will be made. We are fallen into a strange and awful state.”\*

This appeal, however, was not it seems, wholly without effect. I am informed that Sir Henry Moncrieff, after hearing it, declared that “he would not lay his head on his pillow,” till he had done something in the business. Mr. Horner, probably on his representation, introduced the subject into Parliament, and by an arrangement with the East India Company, provision was made for the Presbyterian worship in Calcutta. Miserably defective as that establishment was, it has proved of late, under happier auspices, the nucleus of exertions, which promise to be extensively beneficial to that wide and long-neglected portion of our dominions.

The success which attended the Life of Knox encouraged the author to proceed with the history of the Reformation in the manner which he had proposed to himself; and he turned his attention to the Life of Andrew Melville. Though this work did not appear till 1819, it was begun shortly after the publication of Knox, and considerable progress had been made in it so early as 1814; the intervening

\* To Rev: John Aitken, Aberdeen, March 31, 1813.

period being occupied in those minute researches, the labour of which can be but slightly estimated from the space in the work occupied by its results. In April 1815, he paid a visit to St. Andrews, in the University of which Melville was Principal, where he met with the utmost attention, particularly from Dr. Lee, the Professor of Church History, to whose aid he was greatly indebted in discovering materials for his future work.

In the early part of the following year, he had to lament the loss of his valuable and venerable friend, Professor Bruce, who died 18th February 1816. How acutely he felt this bereavement, we may judge from the following correspondence:—

“*February* 19, 1816.—I have to communicate to you the afflicting intelligence that our father, Mr. Bruce, died suddenly yesterday evening. He preached yesterday, although he appeared unwell, and by five o'clock he was in eternity. As far as regarded him, there is much mercy to be seen in the manner of his removal. His friends often contemplated with uneasiness the prospect of his being overtaken with infirmity and sickness, while he had no relation to pay him the necessary attention in such circumstances. And he himself was not without anxiety upon this head. But all these fears have been removed, and he has been taken away without pain, without sickness, without confinement to bed for a single day, without any interruption of his ministerial work—after he had finished his labours, and when he was standing faithfully at his post. ‘The things concerning him have an end,’ (the text he preached from on the preparation of our last sacrament.) He has joined the higher branch of ‘the family in heaven and earth,’ (his text on the thanksgiving day.) And is now ‘without fault before the throne,’ (the text of his last printed sermon.) Fain would I dwell on this bright side of the dispensation, to divert my mind from turning to the dark side, to which I have not yet had courage to give a single look. The Lord

liveth—his hand is not shortened, and he doth all things well.”\*

Again he writes:—“*Feb.* 24.—I cannot describe to you the situation in which I am. My heart felt for some time as a stone, and even yet when I am recovered somewhat from the shock, there remaineth no strength in me. The early reverence which I felt for him as a teacher, mellowed by the familiarity and intimacy to which I have since been admitted with him, the interest which he condescended to take in my affairs, and which he allowed me to take in his, the pleasure which I felt and the benefit which I derived from his conversation and his correspondence, have all contributed to make the stroke in some respects more heavy to me than perhaps it is to any of his brethren, and gave him a place in my affections of which I was not fully aware, until I was told that I could no longer call him by the name of friend or father. But how selfish am I to intrude and dwell upon my poor interest and personal feelings, when the church and world have suffered so great a loss! My heart breaks when I think of the poor little flock of students, from whose head the Lord hath taken away their master. May the merciful Shepherd turn his hand upon these little ones!”

About this time the persecution of the Protestants in the south of France, which followed soon after the restoration of the Bourbon family to the throne, furnished a new topic of public interest to the subject of our memoirs.† Having ascertained

\* To Rev. James Aitken, Feb. 19, 1816.

† It has been the fate of the Protestants of France, at every stage of their unhappy history, to be persecuted for their religion under the pretext of political disaffection to the existing Government. Never was the charge more unfounded than when brought against the Protestants of Nîmes in 1815. In fact the majority of the Protestants being engaged in commerce and manufactures, the fall of Napoleon was to them the dawn of prosperity; and in celebrating the restoration of the Bourbons, their loyalty was manifested in the most unequivocal manner. But it was determined that this should not preserve them from the doom of heretics. It was openly declared, by persons of rank, that “the

the facts, all his zeal for civil and religious liberty, his jealousy of Popery, and sympathy with the oppressed were roused in behalf of the descendants of the once famous Reformed Church of France, with the history of whose early struggles and the shameful pretences under which they were persecuted, he was intimately acquainted. "We have had another glorious war," he writes in January 1816, "and have again triumphed over Bonaparte. And this is enough to us, although we should be overwhelmed with debt, and though Popery and arbitrary power should be re-established over a great part of the continent. This is unquestionably the result; what the intention of individual rulers or of whole courts were, is a matter of no great importance. Those who choose to rejoice in this result, and in the measures which naturally led to it, may rejoice: I do not. *Timeo, et semper timebam Bourbonios.* I am no alarmist, but I cannot help regarding the late atrocities at Nismes, &c., as a less disguised discovery of the spirit of that party in France which has now obtained the ascendancy, and which, if not secretly encouraged by the government, must at least have the greatest influence on their measures."

But in such a cause he could not rest satisfied with a private expression of his feelings. "At a numerous and respectable meeting" of the inhabitants, held on the 25th of January in Merchants' Hall, with Sir Hr. Moncrieff in the chair, he seconded, in a speech of considerable length, a set of spirited resolu-

country would never be quiet without a second St. Bartholomew;" and the peaceable Protestants in the department of the Gard, were assailed, and cruelly massacred by a Romish populace, under the guidance of a set of demons, rivalling in brutality those of the Revolution, amidst the cries of *Vive la Croix! Down with the Protestants!* All this was justified, both in France and in Britain, under the pretext of political reaction. The harrowing details of these cruelties, which were unblushingly denied or misrepresented at the time, have since been amply confirmed.—See *History of the Huguenots*, by W. S. Browning, p. 276, new edition, 1840.

tions which were moved by the Rev. Andrew Thomson, pledging the meeting to interest themselves in behalf of the suffering French Protestants. His address, though marked by what he himself afterwards described as "the flurry which a first appearance causes on nerves not very firmly strung," produced a powerful impression.\* Having, some time after, preached a sermon in behalf of the sufferers, the sympathy of the public was shown by a collection of fifty pounds. And in a "Review of Pamphlets and Documents on the Persecution of the Protestants of France," which appeared in the Christian Instructor for February and April 1816, he vindicated them from the aspersions of the newspaper press, and of the Christian Observer, which, strangely enough, attempted to palliate the atrocities of their enemies. In this Review, accompanied with some illustrations, the following sentiment occurs, which from the weight evidently attached to it by the author, may be here reprinted: "It is a truth that ought not to be concealed, and which has not yet been sufficiently acknowledged, — a truth which, on account of the important admonitions which it conveys to the present and succeeding generations, deserves not merely to be recorded

\* The following note from Dr. Stuart which was rescued from the flames by Dr. M'Crie, with the remark, that it was the last he received from that worthy man, may be here inserted:—"My dear Sir, I regret very much that want of presence of mind and of recollection, prevented me from mentioning some things yesterday, and in particular the conviction I received, of the sufferings of these poor people in Nismes, &c., being occasioned by their being Protestants. This conviction was entirely the effect of what Sir H. M. (Henry Moncrieff) justly called your 'luminous and impressive address.' I do not think you will do justice to the cause if you do not put the substance in writing and give it to the newspapers. I am very sorry, at the same time, that want of courage prevented me from maintaining more explicitly and steadily that *immediate* subscriptions are requisite proofs of our sincerity. I have as little reason for parting with money as most, but I think all we say of sympathy without it, is *vox et preterea*, &c. *As Christians and Protestants* is the preamble. I judged I should have been scouted to have said I do not approve of this. Why exclude 'Unbelievers and Catholics,' if they chose to join in our resolutions. Ever yours, C. STUART."

with pen and ink, but to be graven with a pen of iron and the point of a diamond, on a monument more durable than brass,—that the wretched and wicked policy pursued with respect to the Protestants from the days of Louis XIV. was one of the principal causes of the Revolution in France, and especially of the horrid excesses and impieties with which it was attended.”\*

The publication of the *Life of Knox* had now considerably extended the circle of Dr. M'Crie's acquaintance, and among the first it introduced him to that of the late Dr. Andrew Thomson, with whom he formed a friendship which continued unbroken till the death of that celebrated and much lamented individual. About the time at which we have arrived, Dr. Thomson had little more than commenced that brief but brilliant career, in the course of which he was mainly instrumental, by the force of his talents, eloquence, and decision of character, in reintroducing into the Church of Scotland, the reign of evangelical preaching, and of sound ecclesiastical principle, which have ever since been gradually gaining the ascendancy in her pulpits and councils. The adherents of error, and the advocates of infidelity, found themselves, to their annoyance and astonishment, exposed to a discharge of merciless ridicule and high disdain, as well as resistless argument; the world, in short, was met on its own ground, and worsted with its own weapons; and, as usually happens in such cases,

\* *Christian Instructor*, vol. xii., p. 133.—Mr. Alison does not mention this among his “remote causes of the Revolution.” His opinion is, that “France was not enslaved because she remained Catholic; but she remained Catholic because she was enslaved.” (*Hist. of the French Revolution*, vol. i., p. 57.) But was it not by Catholicism that she was enslaved? And can we suppose that despotism would have flourished so long, or terminated its reign in such a direful explosion, had Popish policy and tyranny not succeeded in banishing the best subjects of France, and “blasting the shoots of religious freedom?” Both members of Mr. Alison's antithesis tell the truth. France was enslaved because she remained Catholic; and she remained Catholic because she was enslaved.

the world got angry, and pathetically complained of the "bad spirit" with which it had been treated. Never, however, was the charge less merited. Dr. Thomson was one of those persons whose real character, when known in private life, is found to be precisely the reverse of the picture, which the imagination had formed of it from public appearances—who are either greatly beloved or deeply hated—and who receive from posterity the justice denied them by their contemporaries. "Bold as a lion," yet possessing all the generosity ascribed to that noble animal—matchless and unsparing as a public disputant, yet without the least drop of bigotry or bitterness—open-hearted as the day—and in his private character frank, bland and engaging in manners, and full of the milk of human kindness, Dr. Thomson was as much the idol of his friends, as he was the object of terror and dislike to his opponents. When to this we add his fearless independence of mind, his devoted attachment to the standards of the Church, and his honest zeal for her reformation, we need not wonder that between such a man and the author of the *Life of Knox*, there should have arisen an intercourse of the most cordial and confidential kind, notwithstanding the personal and professional differences which distinguished them. Dr. Thomson's visits were short but frequent, and in the hilarity and fascinating humour of his conversation, our author found an agreeable relaxation from his severer studies; the hearty laugh, proceeding from "the study," was the well-known indication to the whole household, that he was closeted with Dr. Andrew Thomson. "It was in June 1813," says Dr. Robert Burns in a letter to the present writer, "that I was first introduced to Dr. M'Crie by the late Dr. Thomson. We spent a most agreeable afternoon. I had been ordained about two years before—was quite raw—and not very conversant with the history of our Church. Nor do I think that at that date Mr. Thomson's information as to those matters was very extensive. Well do I re-

collect of his putting to your father the question, 'Can you tell me any thing about Robert Rollock?' Your father was at home on the subject, and told us a good deal about the Principal and his newly erected college; and many subjects of such a kind afforded materials for pleasing and instructive conversation. Next morning we breakfasted with him at his house, and the chief topic of converse was, a review of the Life of Knox in the Quarterly that had just appeared, and not a little amusement did it afford us. It was about this time that he began to write those able articles in the Instructor which shed such a lustre on that periodical."

The epistolary correspondence between Dr. Thomson and our author, from their proximity to each other, consisted of little more than notes, characterized by that strain of familiar repartee in which they were accustomed to unbend themselves in private intercourse. The following may serve as a specimen.

To the Rev. Andrew Thomson.—Oct. 30, 1813.

"DEAR SIR,—Sagacious as you are, and lively as your imagination is, I am sure you will not be able to divine the reason of my intruding on your profound studies this evening.—'What! more last words of John Knox? or more last groans of Cardinal Beaton? Is it No Popery? or is it blood to eat?'—Guess again. I was waited upon this forenoon by two gentlemen, strangers to me. Did you ever entertain any suspicion that what you had said in your last review, respecting the East India Chaplains, was *actionable*?—'What! a new prosecution?'—Guess again. You know Mr. Waugh. Did you ever hear any word of a new magazine—an anti-Christian Instructor?—'What! have you been applied to, to become editor?'—Why not? I hope you will have no objection.—By this time, you will think you are at no loss to divine my drift, although you may be of opinion that I might have chosen a more seasonable time for communicating such intelligence. I must



tell you, however, that you are as far from the truth as ever. But I shall now state my object, provided you will believe that I am as serious in what follows, as I have been foolishly joecular in what I have already written.

“I am exceedingly anxious that you should turn your attention to the Reformed Church in France, with the view of writing its history from the introduction of the Reformation into that kingdom down, at least, to the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. It is a noble and most animating subject. My imagination has often warmed at the contemplation of it; but it always cooled again when I considered its difficulty, on the one hand, and on the other hand that it had been already executed by Laval. But I have been lately looking into his work, which I read long ago, and I find that while it contains a large collection of facts, its defects in point of execution are far greater than I imagined. It is written in the poorest, most frigid and confused manner imaginable; so that nobody will read it but one who can be satisfied with bare facts. We have nothing worth reading even relating to the civil history of that interesting period, until you come to the history of Louis XIV. You will meet with some of the finest, and some of the worst of characters. There is ample scope for politico-ecclesiastical disquisition. I need not remind you of the near resemblance between the Reformed Church of France and our own. The diligence and zeal of the French refugees have collected the most ample materials, and the only thing that is wanting is a hand to digest them. Quick, with whom you are acquainted, has given a journal of their Synods; but neither he nor Laval are read. Aymons, whose work has never been translated, has many things omitted by Quick. In short, I am convinced that it is a grand task, that you would not find it impracticable, and that you would execute it *con amore*. I need not add, that any books which I have on the subject will be at your service.—I must

have an early conversation with you on this point; but the *project* struck me so forcibly this afternoon, that I could not keep it in my breast even till Monday.—I remain yours,  
 THO. M'CRIE.

“*P. S.*—By another hand. [His left hand.]

“Doctor M'Crie is a cunning Fox. Beware of him. He is afraid that you are beginning to acquire a taste for Scots History. And lest you take it out of his hands, would divert your attention to a foreign subject.”

How different (and yet equally characteristic) is the strain of the next communication!

To the Rev. Andrew Thomson.—*Saturday Evening.*

“So your daughter has at last escaped from the sorrows and sins of this life, and has left you behind to witness and to endure them. Is not this the true light in which you should view her departure? and ought not this consideration, if it does not abate our grief, to give it another direction than what it naturally takes?—What a beautiful passage is that in the Lamentations, beginning, ‘It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth!’ You have seen the truth of it in your daughter, and I trust you feel, and will feel it in your own experience, resulting from this and from former tribulations. I lectured the passage lately, but did not reach its spirit, and I would like to discourse on it again.

“I have no doubt that both you and Mrs. Thomson will remember the exhortation that speaketh to you as to children, and remember it as the word of God and not of man. All have need of affliction. Do not ministers need it in a special manner? And are there not certain periods of their life, or certain situations in which they are placed, that eminently require it, and in which they may discern the wisdom and love and faithfulness of Him who sends it—their Heavenly Father and Divine Master? If I have reason to be thankful for any thing, it is for

seasonable chastisements—how I have improved them is a different question. Good were the words of the prophet, ‘Thou, O Lord, knowest me: thou hast seen me, and tried mine heart TOWARD THEE.’ (Jer. xii. 3.) If there were no other thing to reconcile us to afflictions, this should be enough, that they are necessary to fit us for the better and the fuller discharge of our duty to our people, according to the apostle’s declaration, ‘Whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer.’ I am, Dear Sir, yours very truly,

“THO. M’CRIE.”

Very soon after his introduction to Dr. Thomson, he began to contribute occasionally, though by no means regularly, to the pages of the Christian Instructor. His first article in this miscellany seems to have been a Review, in July 1812, of “Milne on Presbytery and Episcopacy;” wherein he brings his historical knowledge to bear rather hard upon the Episcopal “Minister of St. Andrew’s Chapel, Banff.” In August 1813, he again takes the field against Episcopacy, in a Review of Simeon’s “Discourses on the Excellency of the Liturgy.” And it appears he was the “Friend,” who, in April 1815, wrote some severe strictures on the Review of “Mant’s Bampton Lectures,” which appeared in some preceding numbers of the Instructor. These were answered in a following number by the reviewer, Dr. Burns of Paisley, who, in communicating this fact to the writer, adds, with the amiable frankness of his character, “This was the only time when I had the temerity to break a lance with the author of the Life of Knox. I believe your father was in the right. I have learned more of the *Mants* than I then knew.”

The following letter refers to a “Review of the Christian Observer on the Standards of the Church of Scotland,” in the same periodical for June 1816 from the pen of the Rev. Dr. Somerville of Drumel-

zier—in which the creed and discipline of the Scottish Church are vindicated, in a very superior style, from the charge of having fostered skepticism in Scotland, in consequence of their being “too systematic, too exclusive, severe and dogmatical.” The letter is evidently written in the first fervour of admiration, excited by the healthy spirit of genuine liberality and Presbyterianism, breathing in this as in all the productions of that excellent divine.

To the Rev. Andrew Thomson.—*July 28, 1816.*

“MY DEAR SIR,—*Beasti me!* The first part of the Critique on the Observer I read with pleasure, but the second part has delighted me beyond expression. I am ashamed of having put my hand to it by pretending to help it, and by crudely suggesting additions which are brought forward in better manner and fitter place. But you know the old proverb, ‘Fools and children should never see half-done work.’ The only excuse I have is, that you led me into the snare. Tell Somerville, that though he is no *Doctor* (and I hope never will be one, except in the pages of the Observer,) he has more knowledge of divinity than any doctor I know, our friend ——— not excepted,—and that you know is saying a great deal. Tell him, that if all the General Assembly were like-minded with him, I would willingly become their door-keeper; and that if I could be assured that there were fifty as true stanch thorough out-and-in Calvinists and Presbyterians in the *Auld Kirk*, as I think him to be, I would not be much afraid to enter its walls to-morrow, convinced that we would soon be able to rout the whole phalanx of the moderates and religious mongrels. Ay, and we should not be long in having a Solemn League and Covenant, and we would enter England at the head of 20,000 good, hearty, invincible (not soldiers armed with guns and swords, like General Leslie’s, but) *Christian Instructors*, and we would easily put to flight the whole host of Christian Observers, British Critics, and

Anti-Jacobin Reviewers. Tell him—but if you tell him any more, not knowing me so well as you do, and judging of me from my characteristic soberness, he will think that I have become cracked,—an evil, which as I do not happen to be one of the theological geniuses of the age, like ——— or ———, I expect to escape. In all this I assure you that I only express what I feel, and you may judge from this of the cause which has lifted my feelings so much above their sober level.

“I have not seen you since Dr. Chalmers’ Assembly oration. I was dazzled and delighted with it, but not so much charmed as with the paper you have sent me to-night.—Yours ever, THO. M’CRIE.”

The next part of this correspondence is interesting, from the allusions made to the Review of the Tales of my Landlord, a task which, it appears, Dr. M’Crie undertook at the solicitation of his friend, Dr. Thomson.

To the Rev. Dr. M’Crie.—*Dec. 4, 1816.*

“MY DEAR SIR,—I hope you are not forgetting your promise to review Jedidiah Cleishbotham. My opinion now is, that the author is the author of *Guy Mannering*, and that he is Walter Scott. I will tell you the ground of my opinion when we meet. Blackwood is not close enough for us cunning dogs. At the same time, don’t let your zeal for the Covenanters, and your eagerness to be revenged on their vile calumniators, make you neglect the Bishop and Archdeacon of Calcutta.\* They must have a niche in our January number. And pray do them justice.

“The *Christian Observer* is come. There is a paper in it signed “A Scotchwoman,”—in which the good lady attributes her conversion to the English

\* Dr. Thomson here refers to Bishop Middleton’s Charge, and Archdeacon Loring’s Sermon on Confirmation, both of which were reviewed in the *Instructor*, August 1817,—the latter by Dr. M’Crie.

Liturgy in England, calls our form of worship dull and uninteresting, and at the same time complains that in this country the Episcopalians are very unsound and very unedifying. The paper appears to me to be got up for the occasion. As this is a sort of unfair indirect way of carrying on the war, I have a great mind to write a conversion or two for the Instructor; and give all the credit to our own standards. Why should not an Englishwoman be converted by a Scotch Presbyterian—even by a man clothed in “bottomless brecks?” By the way, Dr. — agrees with us in thinking that Walter has not done justice to the Covenanters. But don't quote his authority in your review. I am, my dear sir, yours most sincerely, ANDREW THOMSON.”

To the Rev. Andrew Thomson.—Dec. 11, 1816.

“MY DEAR SIR,—You are prodigiously moderate in your expectations when you look for two reviews from me in one month. You imagine, I suppose, that my brain is as large and as fertile as your own, a mistake which you might have avoided without the assistance of Dr. Spurzheim. Of the Indian Arch-dean and his Presbyterian rival I have not thought, since the day after that on which you sent me their productions. I feel no inclination, nay, I actually feel a strong disinclination and repugnance to take up the subject, and could do it no justice at present, far less, what you expect, *great* justice. After a slice of the fattest and nicest bit of the flesh of Cleishbotham, Claverhouse, Dalziel and other savage wild animals, I have, I confess, a greater longing to be at them, and could instantly fall on without waiting for your formal concurrence and directions. But the vexatious circumstance is, that they are live stock and must be killed before they are eaten, and this will be tough, not to say dangerous work. Figure apart, are you really in earnest about reviewing *Tales of my Landlord*? Is there not an awkwardness in your engaging in such a work? Do you mean it to be execu-



ted in a serious strain, or in a merry mood, or in a manner made up of both. (It is always understood that you and your underling are capable of both.) How will the *Black Dwarf* look in the Christian Instructor? or do you mean to make a scape-goat of him, in the way of sending him off with a single stroke or two? Can you tell me any thing about *The Scotsman*?—Yours,  
 THO. M'CRIE."

To the Rev. Dr. M'Crie.—5, Young Street, Dec. 11, 1816.

"MY DEAR SIR,—To answer all your questions particularly I shall not attempt: but it may perhaps satisfy you if I say once for all—review the Tales and take your own mode of doing it. Begin immediately and go on with all the rapidity of one who has the pen of a ready writer. Spare not the vile Tory of an author. Praise his Scotch, which is exceeding good, but reprobate his principles with all your might. At the same time I cannot well let you off anent the Bishop and Archdeacon of Calcutta. The January number must contain our Indian Recreations, and you will not grudge a forenoon's skelping of the Eastern dignitaries. But however that may be, go on with Cleishbotham. I long to see the Covenanters rescued from his paws. I shall send you your Scots Worthies. I have not the Cloud (of Witnesses,) but I dare say Blackwood has by this time got back his copy from the author of the Tales, and I shall desire him to transmit it to you without delay. You may do with the Black Dwarf what you have a mind. He is an ugly, nasty, hatefu' body. I know nothing about the *Scotsman*, and every body to whom I speak seems to be as ignorant as myself. I should certainly like to see an able, consistent, well-principled Whig paper in Edinburgh. But alas! this is not the soil for such good plants.—I am, my dear sir, yours most sincerely,  
 "ANDREW THOMSON."

The first part of the Review of the Tales appeared

in the *Christian Instructor* for January 1817 and it was continued in the two succeeding numbers for February and March. The author, in spite of all his precautions, was speedily identified by the public. The review (which, by the way, was written while he was suffering under severe illness) afforded him an opportunity of vindicating the characters of our persecuted ancestors from the slanderous misrepresentations of high church and Jacobitical writers.\* And seldom has any production of the kind created such a sensation. Many who had read the *Tale of Old Mortality*, merely as an amusing piece of fiction, were led to regard it in the more serious light of a libel, professing to be founded on historical truth, but in reality exhibiting a ridiculous caricature of the pious and patriotic Covenanters. So important were the charges substantiated against the novel, so unfavourable the impression produced against it, that the author of the *Tales* found it necessary to vindicate himself in a review of his own production which appeared in the *Quarterly Review* for April 1817. That this reviewal, so far at least as his own vindication was concerned, was the production of Sir Walter Scott, has been acknowledged by his biographer. "The late excellent biographer of John Knox, Dr. Thomas M'Crie, had," says Mr. Lockhart, "considered the representation of the Covenanters in the story of *Old Mortality* as so unfair as to demand at his hands a very serious rebuke. The doctor forthwith published in a magazine called the *Edinburgh Christian Instructor*, a set of papers, in which the historical foundations of that tale were attacked with indignant warmth; and though Scott, when he first heard of these invectives, expressed his resolution never even to read them, he found the impression

\* "The truth is, that we would not have deemed the *Tales* worthy of the notice which we have bestowed on them, had we not been convinced that the ordinary sources of public information are deeply polluted."—*Review of Tales, Christian Instructor*, vol. xiv., p. 176.



they were producing so strong that he soon changed his purpose, and finally devoted a very large part of his article for the Quarterly Review to an elaborate defence of his own picture of the Covenanters.”\*

The substance of Sir Walter’s defence may be seen from the following correspondence, given by his biographer:—“What my kind correspondent had anticipated on account of Jedidiah’s effusions has actually taken place; and the author of a very good life of Knox has, I understand, made a most energetic attack, upon the score that the old Covenanters are not treated with decorum. I have not read it, and certainly never shall. I really think there is nothing in the book, that is not very fair and legitimate subject of raillery; and I own I have my suspicions of that very susceptible devotion which so readily takes offence: such men should not read books of amusement; but do they suppose, because they are virtuous, and choose to be thought outrageously so, “there shall be no cakes and ale?”—“Ay, by our lady, and ginger shall be hot in the mouth too.”† As for the consequences to the author, they can only affect his fortune or his temper—the former, such as it is, has been long fixed beyond shot of these sort of fowlers; and for my temper, I considered always that by subjecting myself to the irritability which much greater authors have felt on occasions of literary dispute, I should be laying in a plentiful stock of unhappiness for the rest of my life. I therefore make it a rule never to read the attacks made upon me.”‡ This, however, would not do; Sir Walter found,

\* Lockhart’s Life of Sir W. Scott, vol. iv., p. 34.

† This dramatic witticism is repeated in the Review, and seems to have been as great a favourite with Sir Walter, as it was with Lord Byron, who has prefixed it as a motto to one of his worst pieces. We do not know if Scott would have considered it a proof of “outrageous virtue” to condemn the impurities of “Don Juan;” but he was quite mistaken if he supposed that his antagonist could not relish *innocent* mirth, either in common converse or in the pages of fiction.

‡ Lockhart’s Life, vol. iv., pp. 44, 45.

when he read the review, that his reviewer aimed at higher objects than either "his fortune or his temper;" and it required all his ingenuity to parry what Mr. Lockhart is pleased to call "invectives," but what a great part of the public felt to be a mild and dignified, though indignant exposure of the historical blunders and misrepresentations of the novelist. Of the defence set up in the Quarterly, it may suffice to observe, that it consists for the most part of excerpts referring to the most questionable sayings and doings of the Covenanters, very easy to adduce, but totally insufficient to rebut the grand charge brought against the author of the Tales—that of having studiously concealed the excellencies of these worthy men, under fictitious characters which have nothing to redeem them from abhorrence or contempt, while he as carefully disguises the crimes and cruelties of their persecutors, the most atrocious of whom he holds up to the admiration of his readers. The disclosure which has been lately made of the private sentiments of Sir Walter Scott, in the Life to which we have referred, renders it quite superfluous now to show how far his early and deeply rooted prejudices against the Presbyterians must have assisted in giving shape and colouring to his picture of them. The author who could, in his confidential moments, and in the coolness of epistolary writing, betray such a melancholy state of feeling as to express his admiration of the "noble savage" Claverhouse, and talk of "the beastly Covenanters,"\*

\* "As for my good friend Dundee, I cannot admit his culpability in the extent you allege; and it is scandalous of the Sunday bard to join in your condemnation, "and yet come of a noble Græme!" I admit he was a *tant soit peu* savage, but he was a noble savage; and the beastly Covenanters against whom he acted, hardly had any claim to be called men, unless what was founded on their walking upon their hind feet. You can hardly conceive the perfidy, cruelty and stupidity of these people, according to the accounts they have themselves preserved. But I had many cavalier prejudices instilled into me, as my ancestor was a Killiecrankie man."—Scott to Southey, 15th December 1807. *Life of Sir W. Scott*, vol. ii., p. 134.

was not likely to do either of them great justice in a work of fiction. It has been said, but on no good ground, that Sir Walter Scott complained of having been personally ill treated by Dr. M'Crie in his review of the Tales. Nothing of this kind appears in his private correspondence; nor can we see any foundation for it in the review. If the complaint referred to those passages in which Scott is evidently pointed at as the author of the Tales, the answer is ready, that nothing is charged against him but what is founded on his avowed writings, and that the veil of concealment which he then wore, if it was too thin to defraud him of the honour universally paid to him as "the Great Unknown," could not be expected to skreen him from the voice of censure. The reviewer himself used to mention, to the credit of Sir Walter, that he met him after "the attack" with as much frankness and cordiality as before. On the other hand, there is as little ground for the insinuation thrown out by the anonymous writer referred to in a former page, that Dr. M'Crie felt as if he had been personally aggrieved by Sir Walter's attacks on the Covenanters; though he certainly felt indignant at the injustice done to their memory.\*

Southey was not the only one of Scott's friends who was startled by his extravagant notions regarding Claverhouse and the Covenanters. In these, he seems to have shot ahead of all his correspondents, Toryish as they were. If his sentiments meet with more extensive sympathy now, it is because his works have created a taste which did not formerly exist—or, if it did, was only to be found among the "Jacobite relics" of the north of Scotland, to whom the ancient feelings of hostility to the Covenant descended with all the pertinacity of a Highland feud.

\* "I may just mention," says this writer, "that he (Dr. M'Crie) could never forget the attack made by Sir Walter Scott, in some of his novels, on his friends the Covenanters. This he seemed to feel almost as acutely as if it had been a personal insult, and no wonder, for he had identified himself completely with all their "sayings and doings." Hence he never would admit that Scott was one of our great novelists, and I remember him maintaining stoutly one day at dinner, (after, I may remark, he had given us a grace quite in the style of a Covenanter,) that Fielding was far superior to him. Nothing we could retort could shake him in this opinion, and he continued maintaining his point with

It is somewhat remarkable, that while thus engaged in vindicating the memory of the persecuted Covenanters, our author discovered and rescued from destruction a work written by one of the most eminent of their persecutors—a manuscript history by Sir George Mackenzie. About May 1817, a large mass of papers was brought to the shop of a grocer in Edinburgh, and purchased by him for the humblest purposes of his trade. From these his curiosity induced him to select a manuscript volume, which appeared to him to be something of an historical nature, and by an equal piece of good fortune he communicated the volume to Dr. M'Crie, who soon discovered that it was the composition of Sir George, and that in truth it must be a portion of that history of his own times which had been so long a desideratum in Scottish literature. Of this the intrinsic evidence was obvious and complete; and the manuscript, though written by one of the ordinary transcribers of that age, was decisively identified by numerous corrections and additions in the well-known hand of Sir George Mackenzie himself. A short notice of the discovery of the manuscript, and a few interesting specimens of its contents, were communicated by our author at the time to the editor of one of the literary journals,\* to whom he says:—"I literally found the manuscript which I mean to describe to you,

most determined firmness. Indeed, it might be said that Sir Walter and he were *prejudiced* on opposite sides of the question, the former on the side of Episcopacy, and the latter on the part of Presbytery. Scott was powerful *only in ridicule* when he attacked the Covenanters; and perhaps the *weakest* things ever written by M'Crie, were his critical effusions (published in this Magazine) on the *Tales of my Landlord*." (*Christian Instructor* for October 1835, p. 673.) Few good Presbyterians will agree in the censure here pronounced on the review in the *Instructor*. As to the preference Dr. M'Crie is said to have expressed for Fielding over Scott, I do not believe he would ever have *seriously* contested the point; or if he did, it was only as to the quality of the wit displayed by the two novelists. He held, I am aware, that Scott "had a turn for humour which indulged itself in the ridiculous, because it could not rise to delicate or dignified wit."

\* Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, No. iii., June 1817.

— *in vico vendentem thus et odores;*

and unfortunately it had suffered to a considerable extent before I rescued it from the hands of the merchant, who had purchased it as waste paper. It is a quarto volume, bound in vellum, and written in a fair hand about the beginning of the 18th century. Nearly 300 pages of it remain. I cannot say that this manuscript contains much information which can properly be called new. It does however state facts which I have not found elsewhere; and it certainly throws light upon the transactions which it relates. A history of that period by a person of such intelligence and opportunities of information as Sir George Mackenzie, must deserve to be preserved and consulted." The original volume he transferred into the hands of Thomas Thomson, Esq., under whose superintendence it was printed in 1821. "It must be regretted," says that learned antiquary, in his preface to the work, "that the other literary pursuits in which Dr. M'Crie has been so usefully engaged, should have prevented him from undertaking the publication of the manuscript he had so fortunately rescued from destruction, and which his minute and accurate knowledge of the history of the period to which it relates would have enabled him so fully to illustrate."

Shortly after this, our author was rather unpleasantly brought before the public, by an anonymous writer, who took offence at his supposed connexion with Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine.\* The October number of this periodical contained a very exceptionable *jeux-d'esprit*, under the well-known designation of the "Chaldee manuscript," in which most of the literary characters of Edinburgh were introduced

\* This supposition may have arisen from the circumstance of the September number having contained a paper of his, being an "Account of a manuscript of Bishop Lesley's History of Scotland, in the possession of the Earl of Leven and Melville." This paper was sent while the Magazine was under the conduct of his amiable and lamented friend, Mr. Thomas Pringle.

in an enigmatical style bearing too close a resemblance to the phraseology of Scripture. Among the rest, Dr. M'Crie figured, as a supporter of the magazine, in the character of a griffin.\* Indignant at what appeared so unseemly a conjunction, some individual under the name of *Calvinus*, published "Two Letters to the Rev. Dr. Thomas M'Crie and the Rev. Mr. Andrew Thomson, on the Parody of Scripture, lately published in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine," in which he warmly remonstrates with both of these gentlemen on the inconsistency of their having any thing to do with such a periodical or with its publisher. This was followed by "Another Letter," and soon after by "Two more Letters" to the same persons, in which they are severely lectured on the silence with which they had treated these remonstrances. But indeed they do not seem to have considered themselves called on to answer the summons of an anonymous writer, who, by *publishing* his letters, showed that his principal object was gained by the opportunity which they afforded him of expressing his sentiments regarding the obnoxious periodical. The only allusion to the subject which I can find in Dr. M'Crie's correspondence, is the following in a hasty note to Dr. Thomson:—"Well: and how do you relish the letter of your good friend and great admirer *Calvinus*? Glad you have got off so scratch-free? Gratified with his equivocal and conditional praise, and determined to merit and secure it by never entering again the virgin-door of Blackwood, and by immediately withdrawing from him your Discourses, and your Instructor, as well as your Essay on Education, with all the embryo and *de futuro* productions of your brain? Pleased with the statement that you maintain the *inexpediency* of foolish talking and jest-

\* "And the Griffin came with a roll of the names of those whose blood had been shed, between his teeth; and I saw him standing over the body of one that had been buried long in the grave, defending it from all men; and behold, there were none which durst come near him."

ing? And absolutely delighted at being assured that ‘religion, like a well-made coat, sits so easy upon you?’—*Omnino.*”

A more serious affair engaged his attention before this year had closed. Many will remember the deep sensation produced on the public mind by the death of the Princess Charlotte. Calculating on this, the Court papers announced that on the day of the funeral, Wednesday, November 19, 1817, the churches through the whole country were to be opened for the performance of divine service; and the magistrates of Edinburgh, with the concurrence of some of the clergy, issued a proclamation to this effect on the preceding Monday. With very few exceptions, this order was obeyed by all the Established and Dissenting Churches in the city. St. George’s, however, was shut, Dr. Thomson having positively refused to perform divine service on the funeral day. A keen discussion ensued, in the course of which Dr. Thomson’s character was very roughly handled, and his motives grossly misrepresented. “Paragraphs appeared in the newspapers denouncing the ‘outrage’ which had been committed, and loudly demanding satisfaction. Public vengeance was invoked on the head of the offending individual, as if Heaven had pointed him out as the victim to appease the indignation which had gone forth against the land.” After several pamphlets had appeared on both sides, our author came forward in defence of his friend, in a piece entitled “Free Thoughts on the late religious celebration of the funeral of her Royal Highness, the Princess Charlotte of Wales; and on the discussion to which it has given rise in Edinburgh. By Scoto Britannus.” In this publication, he embraces the opportunity of showing that the burial-service of the Church of England,—of which the Edinburgh solemnity is described as having been “a clumsy imitation,”—was repugnant both to the letter and spirit of our ecclesiastical constitution. He reprobates the

manner in which it had been got up, and the attempt made to prescribe to the Scottish Church in matters of divine worship; and points out the danger of adopting, even partially, such Episcopalian usages, which, introduced irregularly and during a period of public excitement, might become a precedent for justifying farther innovations. These reasonings were considered so conclusive in vindication of Dr. Thomson, that the voice of censure was hushed, and nothing more was heard on the subject.

I must not avoid mentioning, that in addition to his other labours, during the years 1817 and 1818, he consented, though with great reluctance, to perform the duties of theological professor to the small body with which he was connected. He would, on no account, however, agree to continue longer in that office, and could not be prevailed on to resume its labours till 1834, when he agreed to assist the late Professor Paxton. In conducting the studies of the theological class, he devoted himself chiefly to examination,—a method of tuition from which the students found the highest benefit. His theological lectures were very few, and chiefly related to biblical criticism.

In November 1819, appeared the *Life of Andrew Melville*, which, says the author, in the preface, “may be viewed as a continuation of the account of ecclesiastical transactions in Scotland, which I some years ago laid before the public in the *Life of John Knox*.” And to this I may add the closing sentence of the work:—“I conclude with a single remark, containing the chief reason which induced me to undertake this work, and to devote so much time and labour to its execution. If the love of pure religion, rational liberty, and polite letters, forms the basis of national virtue and happiness, I know no individual, after her Reformer, from whom Scotland has received greater benefits, and to whom she owes a deeper debt of gratitude and respect, than **ANDREW MELVILLE**.” In this high estimate of Melville’s character and worth, few perhaps besides Presbyterians can be expected



fully to coincide.\* In fact, by selecting such a subject, he forfeited the sympathy of a very numerous class of readers who were delighted with his former work; and had he followed out his original plan of a descending series of biographies, such is still the state of parties among us that, in proportion as he descended the scale of history, I have no doubt the number of his admirers would have gradually lessened and dropt off, till, in all probability, there would have remained as few to congratulate him on his final effort, as there were to encourage him in his first attempt.

Andrew Melville was the champion of Presbytery; and a considerable part of the work is devoted, as might be expected in such hands, to the defence and elucidation of the principles of Presbyterians. To the subject of church government, Dr. M'Crie, as he himself once said, "had turned his attention during the greater part of his life." His reading on the subject was very extensive, and the result of his researches was a full persuasion of the divine right, or Scriptural appointment of that form of policy which has been generally adopted by the Churches of the Reformation. Sensible of the difficulties of the subject, he avoided all dogmatizing, and spoke of it with extreme caution. So delicate indeed were his feelings in this matter, that instead of directly expressing his own sentiments respecting Episcopacy, he has preferred allowing Melville to speak for him, by giving the substance of his speech before the As-

\* "The inferior clergy," says a late writer, "usurped the authority which was inconsistent with the proper object of their bishops, and even dared to depose bishops, and to censure the Episcopal office, under the influence of a misguided man, named Melville."—(*Palmer's Treatise on the Church of Christ*, vol. i., p. 574) "It is chiefly for this salutary exertion of his influence (observes Dr. Irving) that the memory of "a misguided man, named Melville," continues to be venerated by a large proportion of his countrymen, who regard the abolition of prelacy as the second great reformation of the national church. The lucubrations of the Oxford apostolicals have no tendency to recommend diocesan Episcopacy, under any form or modification, to any Presbyterian of common sense."—*Lives of Scottish Writers*, vol. i., p. 184.

sembly 1575. “‘He was satisfied,’ he said, ‘that pre-  
lacy had no foundation in the Scriptures, and that,  
viewed as a human expedient, its tendency was ex-  
tremely doubtful, if not necessarily hurtful to the  
interests of religion. The words *bishop* and *presby-  
ter* are interchangeably used in the New Testament,  
and the most popular arguments for the divine origin  
of Episcopacy are founded on ignorance of the original  
language of Scripture. It was the opinion of Jerom  
and other Christian fathers, that all ministers of the  
Gospel were at first equal; and that the superiority  
of bishops originated in custom, and not in divine ap-  
pointment. A certain degree of pre-eminence was  
at an early period, given to one of the college of Pres-  
byters over the rest, with the view or under the  
pretext of preserving unity; but this device had of-  
tener bred dissension, while it fostered a spirit of  
ambition and avarice among the clergy. From ec-  
clesiastical history it is evident, that, for a considerable  
time after this change took place, bishops were paro-  
chial and not diocesan. The same principles which  
justify, and the same measures which led to the ex-  
tension of the bishop’s power over all the pastors of  
a diocess, will justify and lead to the establishment  
of an archbishop, metropolitan, or patriarch over a  
province or kingdom, and of a universal bishop, or  
pope, over the whole Christian world. He had wit-  
nessed the good effects of Presbyterian parity at Ge-  
neva and in France. The maintenance of the hierarchy  
in England, he could not but consider as one cause of  
the rarity of preaching, the poverty of the lower or-  
ders of the clergy, pluralities, want of discipline, and  
other abuses which had produced dissensions and  
heart-burnings in that flourishing kingdom. And  
he was convinced that the best and only effectual way  
of redressing the grievances which at present afflicted  
the Church of Scotland, and of preventing their  
return, was to strike at the root of the evil, by abolish-  
ing prelacy, and restoring that parity of rank and au-

thority which existed at the beginning among all the pastors of the Church.' ”\*

I have quoted this paragraph at length, because it contains, within small compass, not only the heads of the argument against Episcopacy (in which presbyterians are joined by all other parties) but the biographer's own judgment on this much litigated question. As to the dogma of “the uninterrupted succession of the hierarehy,” he could never speak of it without a smile; † regarding it as one of those “childish things” which are put away by the wisest, and only indulged in by the weakest advocates of the system. If, indeed, he felt any difficulties connected with the subject of church government, they referred to the proper adjustment of the authority of the rulers of the Church and the due liberty of the Christian people—a point in the determination of which, as we shall see, he considered that much delicacy and caution were required.

The Life of Melville is so strictly biographical, that it may be likened to a gallery of portraits, varying in size according to the importance assigned to the characters introduced. Of the elder Melville, we have a full-length figure, presented in all the attitudes of his hardy and high-principled patriotism. In portraying these, the biographer is evidently at home—whether we see the energetic Reformer, unclasping the Hebrew Bible which was suspended at his girdle, and throwing it on the council table, with a challenge to his judges to show that he had exceeded his instructions—or the dauntless Principal, barring the door on Mr. John Caldeleugh, who had threatened him with personal violence, and exclaiming, “Ho! is this you that will hough men!”—or the bold patriot, advancing to the table, in answer to Arran's challenge, “Who dare subscribe these treasonable articles?” with “WE DARE!”—or the stern Presbyterian, taking King James by the sleeve and calling

\* Life of Melville, vol. i., p. 3, (2d Ed.)

† Ibid. vol. i., p. 104. Note S.

him "God's silly vassal," and shaking the "Romish rags" of Archbishop Bancroft.\* Of James Melville we are presented with a half-length portrait, the softness and simplicity of his features contrasting very strikingly with the more strongly marked but not less amiable character of the uncle. While of the subordinate personages in the history, we have a set of miniatures, among which that of the "English Solomon" must be allowed to be a striking likeness, now that the contemptible character of James is beginning to be better understood.

We are aware that some serious readers have been disappointed on finding that the piety of Melville does not occupy more space, and have felt that if this part of his character had got more prominence, the book would have been more useful. We are not quite sure how far this feeling is correct. To other minds, equally devout, such an objection would not occur. Piety manifests itself in a variety of ways: in Melville we see a man entirely devoted to the defence and advancement of true religion, as well as to the diffusion of learning and liberty over his country; and in these undoubted results of piety of heart, we see religion expressing itself in as powerful and salutary forms as if, without such evidence, we had learnt his character from the language of a devout diary. "As to the tendency of the work to convey instruction," says one of its reviewers, "we have no hesitation in saying, that if the time should ever come when the great mass of Christian teachers should arrive at that power of religious principle, that zeal and energy and unwearied activity in the best of causes, and any approach to that learning which Melville possessed, we should see a new era in the Church of Christ, and a brighter one than has ever been witnessed in this country."†

The Life of Melville, as was to be expected, has

\* Life of Melville, vol. i., 181, 169, 183, 391; vol. ii., p. 159. (2d Ed.)

† Christian Repository for December 1820, p. 757.

not proved such a general favourite with the public as that of Knox;—we miss the stirring incidents, the *alto rilievo* figures that strike and charm in the latter work; many of its details can only interest the man of learning; and above all, the struggles in which Melville was involved are apt to be regarded as less noble, because less vital, than those of the first Reformer. The character of Knox is elevated by the scenes in which he moved—that of Melville is sustained solely by its own merits; and our admiration of the hero is lessened by the meanness of his opponents. Had James been a greater prince, Melville might have appeared a greater man. The author himself had no high hopes of its popularity. “I have no expectation,” he says to one of his friends shortly after its publication, “but that the tone which is taken in speaking of Presbytery, &c., will give very general and great offence in the present moderate and lukewarm age, and the mixture of literary with church history will not be to the taste of those who would be disposed in other respects to be pleased.” And yet I have reason to think that, in his own judgment, he silently preferred the Life of Melville to that of Knox. In the character of Melville he found that union of literature and religion, the importance of which, to render the one safe and the other successful, was a favourite topic with him; and the dissolution of which, or what he called “the secularization of literature,” he always regarded as one of the most ominous symptoms of our times.\* Besides the work had cost him immense labour—he used to say “a hundred times more labour than Knox, though what had taken him days and nights to discover, would not be apparent to the reader;”† and the field

\* Sermons by Dr. M'Crie, p. 333.

† To the truth of this, the present writer, having been employed as a subordinate caterer for materials in drawing up the history of Melville, can add his humble testimony. Every source which promised to throw light on the subject was explored—not a fact or name was introduced without tracing it through every avenue of information; in short, no toil nor expense was spared to

being in a great measure new and untrodden, the result of his painful researches, when imbodied in a regular form, might appear endowed with attractions somewhat similar to those which endear to the poet the creations of his own fancy.

The *Life of Melville* was not noticed in either of the great rival Reviews—the *Edinburgh* or the *Quarterly*. The reason, which was currently reported at the time to have been assigned for this omission by the accomplished editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, was that it would require some years' reading to qualify himself for reviewing such a work. In various other periodicals, however, religious and literary, the work was reviewed, more or less favourably according to the political or ecclesiastical leanings of the conductors. From the high-church Episcopalians of the *British Critic*, the memory of Andrew Melville could expect little better treatment than he received in person from the Barlows and Bancrofts of the 17th century. No attempt is made to controvert the historical statements in the *Life*, but it is asserted that they rest chiefly on the partial authority of James Melville's diary, which not being then published, "may, of course," observes this candid critic, "be garbled and misquoted." The insinuation was superfluous, for he declares his conviction that, after all that the author has done to recommend his hero, "no one, who thought ill of 'Mr. Andrew' before, will think better of him now." In practical illustration of this remark, the *British Critic* proceeds, in the coolest manner, to repeat the slanders against Melville which his biographer had shown to be totally without foundation. Nor does the biographer himself escape without his due share of vituperation. "In his own way," says the reviewer, "Dr. M'Crie

authenticate the minutest statements. He may be said to have literally complied with the poet's advice, by taking nine years to complete the work; and some idea may be formed of his assiduity in its execution, when I mention, what he has been heard to declare, that, while thus employed, he had not had a newspaper in his hand for twelve months.

is another Old Mortality.\* With pen and ink, instead of chisel and mallet, he continues to repair the sepulchres of the prophets, whom his fathers slew; and in a mood nearly as gloomy and morose as that in which the ancient rustic traced the decayed letters on the moss-grown slab, does this sedulous author revive all the fairer recollections connected with the history of the bold *rebellious fanatics* who figured most prominently in the early days of the Scottish Reformation." "The author appears throughout as a bitter and determined partisan." He is a writer "who revives in his work all the bigotry of the most ignorant times, and who labours to represent in his own person the full amount of that enmity and fanatical moroseness towards Episcopal government, which could only be excused in a puritanical leader of the 16th century." "He personates in his style, the exact manner and gait of the fiery zealots whom he so vehemently admires; and admires, be it observed, not merely for their virtues, but for the most offensive parts of their character. The consequence of this is, that an almost dramatic effect is often given to that part of his subject in which the malignity, coarseness, fanaticism, and insolence of the covenanting faction, are brought upon the stage; and were our author equally able to enter into the character of their opponents, he would be better qualified to write the history of the age which he has selected, than almost any writer we are acquainted with. But we are sorry to say, that Dr. M'Crie's sympathy is about as narrow as his bigotry; and he seems as little able to conceive what beauty is to be found in any merely gentlemanly feel-

\* The fancy as well as the judgment of reviewers is very much under the guidance of their prejudices. Another periodical finds in our author a resemblance to no less a personage than Wellington! "There is a heroism as high in its objects, as daring in its enterprise, and assuredly less mischievous in its aberrations, in thus fearlessly facing, in combating and conquering whole ranks of huge and formidable tomes, as in fighting among the Pyrennees, or at Waterloo, with whole regiments of French rascals. Among laborious authors, Dr. M'Crie is a Wellington!" —*Christian Repository*, Dec. 1820, p. 756.

ing or human acquirement, as we are to conceive wherein the merit of rebellion and sacrilege consists. In conclusion, we have only to regret, that Dr. M'Crice did not live two hundred years ago; he would then, perhaps, have afforded the same sort of materials for the historian as he must now be contented merely to feast upon in imagination."\*

I have quoted at greater length from this attack than it deserves, from its being a curiosity in its way; for it is the only instance, so far as I know, during the whole course of his literary career, in which Dr. M'Crice's personal character was openly assailed.† Some readers may feel at a loss to ac-

\* The British Critic for February 1820.

† We must except another attack, still more disingenuous, made in the same periodical, after the publication of the Review of the Tales of my Landlord, and to which Dr. Thomson penned the following indignant reply in the Instructor:—"Of the Critic's personality and unfairness to Dr. M'Crice, the following may be given as a melancholy proof: 'We have a latent suspicion of the cause of the Doctor's enmity against the British Critic; he owes us a grudge for our review of his *Life of John Knox*. The story has reached London, that he suppressed some part of the evidence in the City Records of Edinburgh, submitted to his inspection, by which the moral character of Knox is affected. The man is certainly able; but he as certainly wants temper,' &c., &c. As to the review of the *Life of Knox*, we believe," says Dr. Thomson, "the author never expected any thing from the British Critic but ignorant assertion and contemptible abuse; and surely he has not been disappointed. 'The story that has reached London' is quite worthy of the pen that has attempted to give it circulation, or rather, we are inclined to suspect, that has actually invented it for the occasion. But without copying his Billingsgate phraseology, we must be allowed to say that it is not consistent with the possession of common honesty to bring forward such a groundless and wicked report, (if it really be a report,) in order to discredit Dr. M'Crice as an historian. It is very much like the way in which Claverhouse would have settled the controversy. Any sort of evidence, or no evidence at all, will do to condemn a Scottish Presbyterian. The Critic allows him ability; but how ungracious is the manner of this act of condescension on the part of his high mightiness! '*The man is certainly able.*' The old story, we suppose, has been dwelling on the Critic's mind. Charles II., that wise and immaculate head of the Episcopalian Church, was of opinion that Presbyterianism is not a religion for a gentleman. Indeed, it is not a religion for such gentlemen as either Charles II. or the British Critic. But cannot the critic be consistent with himself even for one minute?"



count for this torrent of invective, the rude violence of which appears as little justified by the work under review, as it is at variance with that liberality and "gentlemanly feeling" of which the Critic would claim a more than ordinary share to himself and his party. Few can have perused the *Life of Melville* without being struck with the temperate tone in which the author asserts the principles of Presbyterianism—principles to which every son of the Scottish Church stands solemnly pledged. It is rather too much to expect that a Presbyterian should entertain that respect for the Episcopal order, which constitutes the very line of distinction between the two rival forms of policy. But if Dr. M'Crie expresses himself strongly against Episcopacy, it is only when it puts forth claims which would go to unchurch every other denomination of Christians. If he vindicates resistance to regal power, it is only in those cases where submission would have been servility, and where the monarch, by stepping beyond the limits of his office as fixed by law, forfeited the respect which was due to his official character. And if, in defending the freedoms used by Melville and his associates, he speaks more energetically than suits the taste of our modern admirers of despotism, it was from no sympathy with the asperity of temper they occasionally displayed, which he does not commend, but from indignation at the spirit evinced by their revilers, who, making no allowance for the provocations they received, would involve, under the same sweeping censure, the rudeness of the men, and the patriotism by which they were animated. We are

Weak intellects are seldom consistent, and so it fares with him. Of this 'man,' who is certainly able, he says in another place, 'We take our leave of the *Christian Instructor*, (that is, Dr. M'Crie,) with much less respect,' (*just as if any body cared for his respect!*) 'for his temper than for his talents; not much indeed for either;' and then, in the next sentence, he recurs to his former sentiments, and adds, 'The *Life of Knox* displays ability and research.' This talker about talent and temper does not seem to know his own mind."—*Christian Instructor*, July 1817, p. 49.

left to conclude, therefore, that this bilious effusion of the *British Critic* owed its origin to a distressing consciousness, that in the *Life of Melville* the author had successfully dissipated that mass of slanderous misrepresentation, by the aid of which alone the abettors of Scottish prelacy have been enabled to throw a veil over the intrinsic littleness of its character, the glaring atrocities of its career in our land.

The *Edinburgh Literary Magazine* for February 1820, in a lengthy review of *Melville*, attempts a middle course. "Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike," the reviewer keeps up a running fire of admissions and retractions—"buts" and "yets," and "neverthelesses" and "notwithstandinges"—till it is hard to say what he is aiming at. "We detest despotism—but the right of resistance is still worse." "It is very far from being our intention to combat the Presbyterian constitution,—though we feel some regret at the harshness with which the biographer speaks of Episcopacy." "Melville was a man of great ability, but," &c. "All this is very true, and yet," &c. "This is all very well, but we must add," &c. In short, the editorial *We* is so candid and impartial, that he will not positively allege that

"Black is so black, nor white so very white."

A more decided and favourable tone was assumed by the *Edinburgh Monthly Review* for the same month. Without entering into the controversy between Presbytery and Prelacy, "we cannot refrain," they say, "from expressing our wonder at the exertions of the author, and our gratitude for the fund of instruction and entertainment which he has afforded us." "It is impossible not to regret that so fine a mind as that of Melville should have been fretted and distracted by ecclesiastical disputes and civil dissensions." "The freedom and fidelity with which he reprov'd vice, exposed him to the resentment of several leading individuals, who would have pre-

ferred a clergyman of the meanest endowments and most indolent nature to a conscientious and zealous teacher, who thought it his duty not only to instruct and exhort, but to rebuke with all authority." "In short, we know few works deserving of higher applause than the Life of Andrew Melville."

With equal favour the work was reviewed in the *Edinburgh Magazine*,—the *Eclectic Review*, Dec. 1821, —the *Investigator*, a London periodical,—*Blackwood's Magazine*, Sept. 1824, (with some qualifications,)—in four numbers of the *Christian Repository*, 1820,—and in two of the *Christian Instructor*, 1824. The opinions of the critics were divided on the question, whether the Life of Knox or that of Melville was the more interesting. By many of them, the preference was given to Melville. The author was allowed on all hands to have supported the high name which he had acquired as the historian of Knox; and the two memoirs were flatteringly styled by some, "The Iliad and Odyssey of the Scottish Church."\*

It is remarkable that while all these periodicals applaud the Life of Melville as a literary work, and some of them, particularly the last mentioned, coincide with the general sentiments of the author, none of them have chanced, or chosen, to express a decided opinion in favour of the bold appearances made by Melville and his friends for the independence of the Church, in regard to ministerial liberty, and the right which they claimed to have their doctrine, when charged with treason, tried, *in the first instance*, not before the civil but ecclesiastical tribunals—a point to which the author appears, from the pains he has taken to defend it, to have attached no ordinary degree of importance. Even the conductors of the *Christian Repository*, a Secession publication, while they censure our Reformers for accepting a civil establishment, or "mounting the beast," as they term

\* *Christian Instructor*, vol. xxiii., p. 773.

it, and thereby forfeiting their independence, at the same time condemn Melville for having adopted the principle to which we refer, and administer a rebuke to his biographer for having "improperly and unsuccessfully, although very ingeniously attempted to vindicate it." Must we conclude then that ministers of every denomination, from those of the *British Critic* to those represented by the *Repository*, agree in holding that the civil magistrate is *the primary and proper* judge of their preaching, whenever it may happen to be thought treasonable; and that, in no case, even in a Christian country, where the Church is legally recognised as possessing a separate jurisdiction, may she claim the right of being the first to examine into charges affecting the conduct of her functionaries in the execution of their ministry? Are no greater immunities due to those who occupy the sacred office of "ambassadors for Christ," who speak in Heaven's name, and are bound, under the most solemn responsibilities, to declare the whole counsel of God—than to the demagogue who panders to the lowest passions of a mob assembled round the hustings? "Is not this to chain them up like the animal employed to keep sentry when the family are asleep, which alarms passengers by its noise, licks the hand that feeds it, and is let loose at its master's pleasure? Who would undertake such a degrading office, but hirelings, parasites, or dastardly, grovelling, and slavish souls?"\* Whatever may be thought of the principle asserted, there can be but one opinion as to the zeal for civil and religious liberty which dictated its defence; and we may safely leave that defence to take its place among other illustrations, afforded us in the present times, of the instructive fact, that those who are the most enlightened defenders of civil establishments of religion, are also the most zealous assertors of the true independence of

\* Life of Melville, vol. i., p. 212. These two sentences were added in the second edition, and, of course, after perusing the criticisms referred to.

the Church; while those who cry most loudly for a total separation between Church and State, would, in such a case, deliver up the Church to lie, like a criminal in manacles, crouching and crawling at the feet of the civil power.

The objections of Dr. Irving deserve a little farther attention. "I am not disposed," he says, "to think with Dr. M'Crie, that Melville urged a good and solid plea when he averred that, in the first instance, he was only amenable to the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical court. He was charged with having uttered seditious and treasonable words in the pulpit, and for such conduct he was certainly liable to ecclesiastical censure; but was the civil judicatory to suspend its right of investigating so grave a charge as this, and to pause till the ecclesiastical judicatory had duly deliberated whether any, and what censure, was to be pronounced? Sins, however glaring, if the law does not rank them among crimes, may safely be left to the discipline of the Church; but if the ecclesiastical tribunal had been found competent to interpose in cases of sedition and treason, what should have prevented it from interposing in cases of robbery and murder? It does not, therefore, appear to have been unreasonable and unjust in Dr. Robertson to identify the plea advanced by Melville, with the claim which the Popish clergy made to exemption from the civil jurisdiction."\* In reply to this I would briefly say, that the whole spirit of the plea was different from that of the Romish clergy, its intention being not to withdraw the persons of the ministers from the jurisdiction of law, but to protect religious exercises from the coercion of despotism; that the reason why the church claimed a right of previous interposition in cases of sedition and treason was, that such crimes have too often been identified with the faithful preaching of the Gospel; and that it does not follow from such a claim, that the

\* Lives of Scottish Writers, vol. i., p. 190.

church had a right to interpose in the case of other crimes which have no supposable connexion with the proper exercise of the ministerial office.\*

The second edition of the *Life of Melville* was published December 29, 1823. The author informs us in the preface, that in preparing this edition he had "corrected such inaccuracies in the language and in the statement of facts as occurred to him. But the chief alteration which has been made is on the arrangement. The accounts of the state of literature in Scotland, which were formerly interspersed through the work, are now collected and placed in two chapters at the close, with the exception of those facts which could not well be separated from the narrative of Melville's studies and academical employments. This, it is hoped," he adds, "will be found an improvement, by enabling the reader to peruse the *Life* without interruption." Great pains indeed had been taken in the preparation of this edition; the work may be said to have been re-written, so extensive are the alterations, and (with some exceptions) the improvements made on the style and arrangement; but it does not appear that the author found reason to retract any statement of importance, or to qualify any of his opinions. Upon the style of the *Life of Melville*, it would not become me to pass a judgment; but I may be permitted to insert here the opinion of one who will be allowed to have been an excellent judge on this point,—the late celebrated Robert Hall of Bristol—which has been kindly communicated to me by one who heard him express it. "Mr. Hall thought very highly of the two great works, the *Lives of Knox and Melville*, on which the fame of Dr. M'Crie chiefly rests. Speaking of other historians, he gave it as his opinion,

\* Let the reader consult *Life of Melville*, vol. i., p. 206—216, 2d ed.; p. 295—304, 1st ed., where Dr. Robertson's charge will be found answered. Some judicious observations on this point occur in an article on Dr. Irving's *Lives of Scottish Writers*, in the *Presbyterian Review*, April 1839, p. 707.

that Hume, in his writings generally, but especially in his History of England, had carried English style to the highest pitch of perfection. Of Robertson he thought less. "Indeed," he said, "I prefer M'Cric to Robertson; there is more vigour in it, and it is more the style of a man of genius."

The year 1820 furnished him with a new topic of interest in the union which was then effected between the two larger bodies of Burghers and Antiburghers, under the name of the United Associate Synod. The distance to which a body of Christians may have silently shifted from their original ground, during a long series of years, is never rendered so perceptible as when they are induced to remodel the terms of their ecclesiastical fellowship; as the defects of an old building only become apparent when an attempt is made to enlarge or alter its structure. The result of the application of this test to the two large sections of the Secession in 1820, was the discovery, then made more palpable than ever, that sentiments had been gradually leavening them both, which placed them in direct opposition to the reformed and covenanted Church of Scotland. In the basis of union adopted by the united body, the subordinate standards of that Church were no longer recognised, as they had been by the first Seceders, as parts of "the covenanted uniformity;" the Confession of Faith and Catechisms were received under limitations, which attached to them, in vague terms, the stigma of teaching intolerance and persecution; a general declaration, informing the world that they were Presbyterians, was substituted in place of the Directory for Public Worship and the Form of Presbyterian Church Government, which were discarded; the decided assertion of the binding obligation of our solemn covenants on posterity, so long distinctive of Seceders, was exchanged for a compliment to "our reforming ancestors," and the ambiguous acknowledgment "that we are under high obligations to maintain and prosecute the work of reformation begun,

and to a great extent carried on by them;" and as the cementing principle of the union, the doctrine of "forbearance" was laid down in such a way as to admit of almost indefinite extension to every point on which the uniting parties might be supposed or expected to disagree.\*

Against a union formed on such principles, a considerable number of ministers, connected with the Antiburgher Synod, protested; and the Protesters, as they were called, constituted themselves into a Synod. This excellent body of men, who were followed by many in their congregations, and in whose number were included the late Professor Paxton, author of the well-known "Illustrations of Scripture;" Dr. Stevenson of Ayr, author of standard treatises on the Atonement, and on the Offices of Christ; Mr. James Gray and other excellent ministers, soon discovered that, in the constitution of the United Synod, there was, besides other defections, an entire breaking up of all the distinguishing features of the Secession; and that, instead of aiming at the reformation of, or contemplating reunion with, the national church, principles were adopted which would necessarily lead to the proclamation of interminable war with all establishments.† Sentiments so similar to

\* *Basis of Union*, agreed upon by the Associate and General Associate Synods, April 28, 1820. *A Key necessary for understanding the Basis of Union* of the United Secession Church. Edinburgh, 1821.

† "We especially regret," says one of the Protesters, "that the article contains nothing satisfying with respect to the original object and inspiring design of the Secession, *the reformation of the Established Church*. The first Seceders, for a considerable period, retained the cheering hope of an honourable return to their mother's house. The expectation infused a truly liberal spirit into their administration, and imparted a character of genuine good-will, even to their pleadings and contentings. They abetted no divisive scheme, in opposition to the true interests of the Church, and proved themselves the steady, consistent friends of Scriptural unity and peace. At an early stage of their procedure, we find the four brethren at the bar of the Assembly, with proposals of accommodation in their hands. 'If,' say they, 'the above things were done, we might have the pros-



those for which Dr. M'Crie and his brethren had contended at a former stage of their appearance, could not fail to produce a mutual understanding between them and the Protesters; and this led to a correspondence, which soon issued in a happy and harmonious union.

Though extremely averse to controversy, and scrupulous, even to shyness, in intermeddling with questions which did not immediately lie in his way, the ominous conjunction of 1820 proved too deeply interesting to our author to admit of his remaining a silent spectator. He willingly entered into a correspondence with his former brethren the Protesters; and the following extracts will illustrate the sentiments he had formed on the points in dispute:—

It is unnecessary for me to expose the plea that “in the Union Church nothing is given up, and in it every vow may be performed.” That this is a false and deceitful “watch-word,” (whatever may be the views of some who use it,) may be discovered by a simple comparison of the Union basis and formula with the formula and vow once in authority among us.—“What has been given up?” it is asked. Every thing that has been in dispute between the two societies for seventy years. The unlawfulness of swearing oaths which are contradictory, and of tolerating practices which are acknowledged to be sinful—the seasonableness of covenanting—the defects of the Revolution settlement, &c. Besides these, other things

pect of a pleasant and desirable unity and harmony with our brethren.’ And down to the year 1747, if any man wished to know on what terms Seceders were willing to return to the Established Church, he had only to consult their public papers. *Now*, we are left without any thing precise, except a vindication of the commencement and continuance of Secession. It might seem harsh to say that we espouse a foreign interest, and proclaim interminable war. But surely our kindred with our mother Church is not acknowledged as of old, and nothing in the Basis pledges the consent of Seceders with respect to the original and most desirable object of their association.”—*Basis calmly Considered*, by the Rev. James Gray, p. 14.

which formed no object of dispute, but were recognised by both sides—such as the perpetual obligation of our covenants—have been given up: not to mention what is taken for granted and recognised, yea what may be considered the corner-stone of the basis, the propriety of laying aside and dropping all things in which the parties differ, or making them points of judicial forbearance, which may be extended and acted upon with indefinite latitude, and which falls in so completely with the loose notions which at present pervade the religious world, and are the very snare by which Seceders are in danger of being caught, and of being stripped of every thing characteristic either of their spirit or of their profession.

“‘But you may retain in the Union all your principles on these subjects as before.’ It is not *my* principles that are in question, but the principles or rather the profession of *the body*; and in this respect every thing is given up. If the question were merely about *my* principles, I would enjoy them at more complete freedom, out of society, and by standing as an isolated and independent individual. A faithful performance of such vows as were made in the Secession, would be fatal to the peace of a society founded on the latitudinarian principles,—it would soon become intolerable by their law of toleration; and experience would show, that the language which they hold is akin to that which has been derided in the abettors of persecution, when they say, We trouble none for his conscience or principles, provided he keeps them to himself, and does not disturb others with them.”

“Your three friends called on me after the Synod. I had a long conversation with them, in the course of which they ultroneously expressed it as their common desire that they should join with the members of our Presbytery in making a stand for the Reformation interest, and urged me, with no little importunity, to publish something which might confirm their statements, and by throwing light on the original object

of the Secession, might pave the way for the real friends of it uniting. On their pledging their word that they were at a point, and did not mean to tamper farther with the popular Union, I gave them something like a promise; and in prosecution of it, I had begun to draw up something in the form of an appendix to a sermon on the healing of divisions in the Church. But the proposal you mention, would in itself prevent me from doing any thing of the kind. If they are desirous of hanging on till next meeting of the Union Synod, and then making a proposition to it, no seer is required to predict that they will go the same way as your brethren on your right and left hand. Strange infatuation! After having discovered the snare by which they are in danger of being caught—after escaping from it with difficulty—after seeing their fellows fall into it one after another—to hover around it, to draw again towards it, to fly about the hand of the fowler and tempt him to spread his net in a more captivating way! Ephraim, ‘silly dove’ as he was, justified his wisdom more than such persons. My dear Sir, it requires all the faith I can muster, propped by all my recollections of what has formerly occurred, to prevent me from hastily saying, ‘All men are liars.’ Blessed be God, who brought about a glorious deliverance in our land, when there were men (of his own providing, no doubt, but still men) of another spirit; for verily if the men of this generation had then been alive, we had been sitting in Antichristian darkness, or writhing under the lash of prelatical taskmasters! I have told you all my heart.”

The same correspondent having put some hypothetical questions for the satisfaction of his own mind, drew forth the following reply:—“Oct. 19, 1820.—There is one sentence in your letter which I do not well understand. After expressing an approbation of what I have published on the subject of the public interests of religion, higher than I expected or am entitled to, you add, ‘yet I fear we differ consider-

ably in our estimate of the worth of latitudinarian religion, and the motives of its patrons, whether they are called Seceders or not.' If you are more charitable than I am in judging of *motives*, I desire to rejoice in your attainments, and hope to learn from you. All I can say is, that I believe there are many who profess strict principles from very unworthy motives, and many who profess lax principles from the best of motives. Nor am I conscious to myself of a prevailing disposition to erect myself into a judge of any man's motives, or summarily to pronounce on those of a whole class or party. If by 'latitudinarian religion' you mean the religious dispositions or the piety of latitudinarians, I can only repeat the same answer—its worth is just like the worth of religion in any other class of men, according to its reality and degree. But if you mean the system of latitudinarianism, then I must say decidedly that I reckon it *worse than worthless*—abjured by Seceders—utterly irreconcilable with their principles—destructive of any thing like a testimony or contendings for truth and reformation—and, if pursued all the length to which its principles lead, eversive of all religion, or of any distinction between that which is true and that which is false. I look upon it as the great plague of the church in the present day, and what to all appearance will become, more than it has yet been, the temptation by which we are to be tried. But it is impossible that this can be your meaning."

"I need not insist," he says in another letter, April 11, 1821, "on the important circumstance of the views of the majority in the Synod being supported by the prevailing tone of public sentiment, and the undeniable fact that sentiments far more liberal and remote from former principles, are entertained by most at least on the Burgher side of the Union—and that there is every reason to look for a gradual development of these, instead of a return to the original ground. I see therefore no prospect of any efficient stand being made for the public cause

unless by a firm and compact, though perhaps small, body of those who are cordially attached to that cause being collected and combined. To this all the real friends of the covenanted cause should bend their endeavours. If this is not done, all seems to be over in our day. When all is examined, it will be found that the question simply comes to this—Latitudinarianism, as hitherto condemned by Seceders, or the Covenanted Reformation, as hitherto avouched by them—whether is the former or the latter of God?”

“November 6, 1820.—I need not suggest to your mind the practical improvement to be made of these distressing and stumbling occurrences. O that we may be kept from taking offence, as well as giving offence, and that we had understanding to see that all the ways of the Lord are right, and to walk in them! Are we not taught, with a strong hand, to cease from man, and not to trust in princes—the princes of God’s people? Amidst all the instability and tergiversation of men and ministers, the hand of God should not be overlooked. It is He that has righteously divided us in Jacob and scattered us in Israel. When ‘Manasseh is against Ephraim, and Ephraim against Manasseh, and they together against Judah,’ it is an evidence that his anger is not turned away. Often have we confessed, and professed to mourn over the sin and apostacy of the land; but, alas! we have not been affected with our own sins, and the fuel we have ministered to the provocation. ‘When ye fasted in the fifth and seventh month, *even these seventy years,*’ (mark the period,\*) ‘did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me?’ During a period of long peace and rest, the Secession body, like other societies, had settled on her lees, and had begun to say, in practical denial of her solemn profession, ‘the Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.’ That we

\* The reference here seems to be to the year 1750, when the breach between the Burghers and Antiburghers was consummated by the latter having pronounced on the former the sentence of excommunication. From that time to 1820, when he was writing, the period was exactly seventy years.

may be defecated, it is necessary that we should be emptied from vessel to vessel.

“All Christians, and ministers especially, ought to lay their account with conflicts in which their hardness as good soldiers of Christ shall be put to the trial. I recollect an anecdote told of himself by our late venerable Professor, Mr. Bruce. After Mr. Walker of Denny-Loanhead had admitted him to communion, he said to him in his homely way, ‘Billy, you have done a thing to-day that may cost you going to the scaffold yet.’ We have not been called to resist unto blood as some of our fathers were in the same cause, but our vow binds us as far as this. I hear Mr. —— is saying, as an excuse for his conduct, that he is wearied of contentions. But we must not be weary of any part of well-doing, which ‘contending earnestly for the faith’ is; nor must we think of laying aside our armour here. It would be well if the present broils made us long for the union and peace of heaven, as David did to escape from Mesech.”\*

No man could be more really solicitous for union among Christian brethren, or could do more in his sphere for accomplishing it than Dr. M'Crie. During the course of negotiations for a union between the Synod of Original Burghers and the Constitutional Presbytery, which commenced at a very early period, and were renewed in 1820,—he showed his zeal in this good work to such a degree, as to excite suspicions in some of his brethren that he was willing to sacrifice for peace the interests of truth. His opinion, however, exactly coincided with that so well expressed by Robert Hall: “Peace should be anxiously sought, but always in subordination to purity; and therefore every attempt to reconcile the differences among Christians which involves the sacrifice of truth, or the deliberate deviation from the revealed

\* To the Rev. James Gray.

will of Christ, is spurious in its origin and dangerous in its tendency.”\*

“I augur little good,” he writes, in 1820, to the Rev. Mr. Taylor of Perth, then Professor of Divinity in the Synod of Original Burghers, “from the movements to a union between the two large bodies of Seceders. If the union take place (and there is reason to think that it will,) it must be on latitudinarian principles. I may be mistaken (and I shall be happy to be found in an error) but I cannot help fearing that with all the professions of liberality, and freedom from prejudice and party spirit, made by the present age, there is a great want of that spirit which leads to a desirable and holy union, of that love to truth, that candour, that openness to conviction, and desire of information, that inclination to *sacrifice every thing but truth and conscience* to the promoting of the public

\* The sentiment which we have quoted above, is remarkably inconsistent with the views on free communion, which Mr. Hall is well known to have entertained and acted upon. But the following extract will show how he undertook to reconcile his theory and his practice. “Suffice it to remark,” he says, “that our dissent from the Establishment is founded on the necessity of departing from a communion, to which certain corruptions, in our apprehension, inseparably adhere; while we welcome the pious part of that community to that celebration of the Eucharist which we deem unexceptionable. We recede from *their* communion from necessity; but we feel no scruple in admitting them to *ours*.”—(*Hall's Works*, vol. ii., p. 435, comp. p. 11.) It is obvious, that were all Christians in other denominations to act upon the same principle, and employ the same language, (which they must be clearly entitled to do, on the supposition that they are as conscientious as Mr. Hall,) there could be no such thing as free communion. Mr. Hall would not compromise his principles by joining in communion with a church to which certain corruptions, in his apprehension, inseparably adhered; neither would Dr. Mc'Crie compromise his principles by joining in communion with Mr. Hall. The only difference was, that Mr. Hall opened *his* door for the free admission of all, who thought more lightly of their peculiarities than he did of his; and on the force of this one-handed charity, (which was no doubt a very convenient mode for augmenting a communion roll,) he was generally accounted a most liberal person; and, as I am informed, expressed great surprise on reading the *Sermons on Unity*, “that a man of Dr. Mc'Crie's high talents and theological attainments should hold the *illiberal* views advocated in that publication!”

cause of God, which will appear when the Lord heals the breaches of Zion, and makes her watchmen to 'see eye to eye.' At the same time, I readily allow that the measures presently in agitation, are a call to all the real friends of the Reformation cause, to try if it is practicable to have any subsisting differences among them removed or amicably arranged. No man can be more convinced of this than I am. The tide of public opinion has set in so strong against that cause, that it will likely require their united strength to resist it. If they remain much longer distinct and separate, they will in all probability decrease and dwindle away; or (which is more probable and more to be dreaded) the cause will die away among them. No vigorous exertions will be made for preserving or defending it,—no exertions proportionable to the opposition that it will have to encounter; and our members will gradually cool in their attachment to it, and become impregnated with the spirit and sentiments that have spread all around them."

His "Two Discourses on the Unity of the Church, her divisions, and their removal," were published early in 1821. The text is Ezekiel xxxvii. 19: "They shall be one in mine hand;" and the chief object is to point out the fallacious and unscriptural character of modern plans of union; particularly that adopted by the United Secession.

"Among these methods of uniting the friends of religion," says the author, "I know none more imposing, nor from which greater danger is to be apprehended in the present time, than that which proceeds on the scheme of principles usually styled latitudinarian. It has obtained this name because it proclaims an undue latitude in matters of religion, which persons may take to themselves or give to others. Its abettors make light of the differences which subsist among religious parties, and propose to unite them on the principles on which they are agreed, in the way of burying the rest in silence, or stipulating mutual forbearance with respect to every thing about



which they may differ in opinion or in practice.”\* Of this spurious charity, there was a vast quantity afloat in the earlier part of the present century; of late, however, its hollowness and insufficiency have been made manifest, and God has written folly upon it, by permitting those who were its most zealous advocates to divide the Church upon a question, on which it must be allowed good men may differ, and the introduction of which has more thoroughly alienated Christians from one another, and scattered the firebrands of discord with more reckless profusion, than any previous controversy—the question, namely, as to the best mode of paying the ministers of the Gospel. Still the Discourses are valuable as a record of the author’s views on the nature of the Christian Church, and the means which are likely to prove most effectual in removing her divisions. The Appendix to these Discourses consists of “A Short View of the plan of Religious Reformation and Union adopted originally by the Secession,”—a somewhat unalluring title to a treatise which will be found to contain, in a very condensed form, the leading arguments in behalf of establishments—a defence of the Reformation, and of the Confession of Faith from the charge of teaching persecuting principles—the nature and obligation of our national Covenants—and the application of the whole to the constitution of the United Secession Church. This volume was not exactly fitted for the end which his friends, who urged him to the task, contemplated, namely, to give a popular view of the original principles of the Secession. It is too profound—enters too closely into questions which presuppose some knowledge of past controversies—deals with *scruples which lie too far below the surface*—to gain the attention of ordinary readers. But on these very accounts, which rendered it less effective at the time, it may prove more valuable as a book of reference to those who are anxious

\* Discourses on the Unity of the Church, p. 89.

to study the subject, should it so happen, (as seems, from the direction of present movements, a not unlikely event,) that the great cause of the Covenanted Reformation, now disowned by the great body of Seceders, shall be resumed and reasserted by the Church of Scotland.

He had no sooner published his work than he began to fear that he had incurred the charge of presumption. "Before engaging in the late small publication," he writes to one of his fathers in the ministry, Feb. 19, 1821, "I was not insensible to the delicacy of the task, nor can I well tell how the repugnance felt to the undertaking was overcome. When the work was going on, I had no time for reflection on consequences. But no sooner was it published than I began to accuse myself of rashness and presumption, in attempting such a work without the consent and advice of my brethren, and in a manner taking it out of their hands. To this succeeded what was as tormenting, a full conviction that I had wronged and injured the cause. Your letter, however, and the trust I repose in your honesty and candour, have served to remove my gloomy apprehensions, and I begin now to think that I have done some justice and no essential (at least) injury to the cause which I wished to serve."

Then came another source of alarm—that of being involved in controversy. "The Two Discourses," he says to another friend, "I do not expect to be popular. The literate would never think of looking at them—the good folk of the auld kirk would throw them away in disgust, and others, whom I need not name, with indignation. There is a rumour that they are to be answered. I hope the Lord will preserve me from controversy. I have a great abhorrence of it; and rather than be subjected to a reply and duply, I would be willing that the Sheriff should confine me for three months in the county jail, for writing against the constitution in church and state." The work, however, was never answered; and, so far as I know,

it was not noticed in any of the periodicals, except the *Scottish Episcopal Review* for June 1821, and the *British Critic* for November of the same year. In these Reviews, the Discourses are treated with wonderful favour; the reviewers found, of course, the divine right of Presbytery taken for granted; and the *British Critic*, availing himself of this, applies the general principles laid down to Episcopacy, quotes from the volume with approbation, and concludes by earnestly, if not seriously, recommending it to the perusal of all the members and clergy of the English Church!

The following letter, written to his friend, Dr. Andrew Thomson, on the publication of his "Sermons on Infidelity," will show the opinion which he entertained of that excellent work:—

"GRAY STREET, February 1, 1821.

"MY DEAR SIR,—Many thanks for your buncy little volume. Blackwood would perhaps mention to you the idea which its shape first suggested to my imagination when he drew it from his desk. I have just finished it, and you may guess from my having accomplished the task so soon, that I felt some interest in the progress. Indeed I have done nothing else (works of necessity and merey always excepted) since it came into my hands. Whatever other vices may cleave to our intercourse, I do not think it has been stained with much flattery. You will therefore believe me, without protestations, when I say that I have been highly gratified in the perusal of the Sermons, and am sanguine in my hopes as to the good which they will be the means of doing. The practical view which is taken of the subject throughout discriminates them from any work of the same kind with which I am acquainted. The topics selected for discussion are all important, they are brought forward in the best and most distinct order, and illustrated, in my opinion, with equal force of reasoning and felicity of expression. Every where the

impress of your mind appears, but it is *softened*, without any impairing of energy or effect. There is enough of argument, and yet less of the air of argumentation which you are accustomed to throw over your discussions. To speak in the language of reviewers—'Where every thing is good, it is difficult to make a selection,'—but I was best pleased with the fourth, eighth, and ninth sermons. By this I do not mean that they are either the ablest, or that they will be the most useful. Every one has his favourites.

"Considering the approbation with which I understand the sermons were delivered from the pulpit, and which you will still be hearing, it might have been more proper for me, (if it were no more than for the sake of seasoning,) to have tried to act the part of a critic in the ordinary sense of the word. A few things occurred in the course of reading, which would have been mentioned if you had been present. Perhaps on a second perusal they may be yet forthcoming, if you have any desire to learn what they are. From what I have said you may gather that they are of minor consideration.—Ever yours,

THO. M'CRIE."

His private opinions at this period, regarding the state of matters, both in the Establishment and in the Secession, appear to have been very gloomy. To one of his old friends he thus writes:—"March 8th, 1821. I have for a long time been inclined to your opinion, that the tendency of the dispensations of Providence was to 'the dissolution of all old establishments.' Yet I have sometimes felt checked by reflecting that Dr. Owen, a hundred and fifty years ago, considered this event as approaching when he published his sermons on 'the shaking of the heavens and the earth.' Providence is not the rule of our duty; and it is well that this is the case. For how small a way do we see into the mystery of its multiform and complicated arrangements, and how often do we find ourselves mistaken in our conjectures, and even in our most

sober and deliberate conclusions respecting its tendencies and the ends which it is pursuing! ‘How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? Go thy way, Daniel,’ &c. ‘What is that to thee? follow thou me.’ But if all existing establishments are about to fall, the call to us is, I think, the louder, to ‘hold fast our profession,’ and ‘look to the things which we have wrought.’ If such an event shall take place, the concussion will not be slight, nor its effects trifling;—much that is good will be overthrown and laid in ruins, along with much that is evil,—great discoveries will be made, and things which we looked not for, and would not believe when they were formerly told us, will be disclosed. If sound and solid principles are not preserved, how shall the new building be reared, and of what kind shall it be? I consider it as a sad token for evil, that the Associate body, who once held forth these, should have relinquished them, at the very time when they had the loudest call to retain and exhibit them; and that by their dereliction they have done what cannot fail to shake and unsettle more and more the mind of the generation. Those who have attended to the rapid strides which Seceders have made within these few years, and observed with what ease they have thrown off what appeared to be deeply rooted in their minds and mingled with all their associations, may be at no loss to form some idea of the *accelerated progress* which they will now make, when released from all former ties, and connected with associates who have long been actuated by a different spirit, and guided by different maxims;—and may also form some idea, though it is likely a very defective one, of the change of sentiment and renunciation of principle which will soon become apparent in the religious world at large.—But I cease to plague you with my forebodings, nor shall I so much as attempt to abate the hopes which you have formed from the exertions to do good in the present day—and which are, I believe, more sanguine than I can cherish.”

In the midst of these melancholy reflections on the state of public religion, he was visited by a severe domestic calamity in the loss of his wife, who died June 1, 1821. Always of a delicate constitution, her nervous system became at last quite debilitated, and for six years she was confined to her room, and latterly almost to bed. She displayed throughout this lingering affliction the strength of her religious principles, and proved that the grace of God alone is able to support and soothe the soul; nor did her natural shrewdness of mind, and playfulness of temper, forsake her; during the whole of her distress, every thing connected with household duties was directed by herself with punctuality and managed with economy. It was during this season of trial that the amiable traits of her husband's character were most strikingly developed. Many, I am aware, will blame me for not dwelling at greater length on this part of his character, which struck with admiration all who had an opportunity of witnessing it. The gentleness, the tenderness, the affectionate assiduity, which never relaxed, and with which he would suffer no other engagements to interfere, while he watched over the fragile being who clung to him for support—may be remembered, but cannot be described. The intense anxiety with which he marked the progress of her disorder appears in the whole of his correspondence; and as it approached its fatal termination, he endeavours, vainly, to summon resolution to meet the issue. "My family distress has been great," he says, May 9, 1821, "and it was with difficulty I could bear up during the sacramental work. Mrs. M'Crie is now, however, somewhat relieved and recruited. Both you and I, though on different grounds, have need to obey the voice, *Sursum corda!*\* We may at least lift up our eyes, and He who made both can cause the eye to affect the heart, and draw it after it." But after the sad event, there remains not the slightest

\* "Lift up your hearts."

notice or memorandum, under his own hand, from which we can discover the state of his feelings. The wound went deep, but it bled inwardly. His dejection was but too visible; but with the natural reserve which made him conceal from his friends and family those private sorrows which touched him most keenly, there was evidently mingled that devout acquiescence in the will of God which breathes in the words he chose for his text after his bereavement:—“I was dumb, and opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it.”

The want of any private record of his feelings under these trying circumstances, might be supplied, in some degree, from his correspondence with those who had met with similar trials. The following letter of condolence, written a few years after this, to an aged friend labouring under the combined calamities of blindness and bereavement, discovers the source from whence he himself drew consolation; and it is valuable, though it were only to show how tenderly he could enter into the feelings, and express himself in language suited to the capacity, of the most simple-minded Christian.

“DEAR SIR,—I sympathized with you deeply on hearing of the loss of your valuable partner, and would have written you at the time, but thought it better to delay for awhile. I know from experience, that a person in your circumstances does not always need comfort most at the time when the trial is fresh. He is sometimes so stunned with the severity, or so surprised with the suddenness or strangeness of it, that he does not feel himself fit for listening to what may be said to him. At such a time, too, there are ordinarily a great number of persons prepared to condole with him, and to suggest topics of consolation. But though the sharpest trial is at the moment of bereavement, this is not always the heaviest. After we get time to recover ourselves and to reflect, our loss is felt to be greater than ever, and we find that we have more need of comfort than we had at the

beginning. You may perhaps feel something of this kind. To lose so affectionate, sensible and godly a companion as you were favoured with, and after living so long together, is certainly no ordinary trial. And you may perhaps reflect that, in your circumstances, it has peculiar aggravations. But I doubt not that you will also call to mind, that there are other circumstances that strongly plead for resignation and praise. Is it not great matter of thanksgiving that she was lent to you so long? If you were happy, and so long happy, in the enjoyment of her company, should you not reflect on this with joy, instead of turning it (as our minds are too apt to do) into matter of bitter regret? You are not left alone and without earthly friends, whom you love and by whom you are beloved. And though none of them can fill the place of her who is gone, may you not turn this to your advantage, by rising in your affections heavenward, becoming more dead to the world, and confiding more unreservedly in Him who hath said, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee?' It ought to give us joy (and it would do it were we not so selfish even in our love) that those whom we loved best are now better than they ever were with us, or could have been if they had remained here—that they are free from pain and sorrow, and anxiety and sin—that they are just where they wished to be in their best moments, and find it to be a far more blessed place than their hearts had ever conceived it to be. The best improvement we can make of their death is to quicken our hearts to a cheerful and diligent preparation for following them. They have only gone a little—a very little before us. Dear Sir, I have no doubt you are comforting yourself and family with these things. But, after all, our feelings will often get the better of our faith. I know that when I come to ——, I shall find a great blank. What then must you feel? But God 'filleteth all in all.' I am, Dear Sir, yours affectionately,

“THO. M'CRIE.”



While yet smarting under his loss, he engaged in drawing up a review of Orme's Life of Owen, which appeared in the Christian Instructor for July, August, and September 1821. Part of the materials for this valuable and important article was furnished by Dr. Brown of Langton, but the greater portion of it was written by our author, the impress of whose style and manner can hardly be mistaken; "and, indeed, says Dr. Brown, in communicating this fact to the present writer, "I consider his portion of it as the most valuable historical vindication of Presbyterians from the misrepresentations of Independents that is any where to be met with."

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## CHAPTER VI.

FROM THE PUBLICATION OF THE LIFE OF MELVILLE,  
TO THE PUBLICATION OF HIS LAST HISTORI-  
CAL WORK, THE HISTORY OF THE  
REFORMATION IN SPAIN.

1821—1829.

Soon after the severe bereavement recorded in the close of the foregoing chapter, Dr. M'Crie's health began to be seriously affected by his intense studies. He complained of shiverings, accompanied with general debility and spitting of blood. In addition to his other ailments, his eyesight suffered so considerably from constant application to old faded manuscripts, that total blindness was at one time apprehended, and he was obliged to employ an amanuensis. It is not surprising that these circumstances should have produced a depression of spirits unfitting him for active exertion. "I am not naturally melancholy or enthusiastic," he confesses to a friend in January 1822, "but I have been inclined for some time to think that

my public usefulness (if I have been in any good degree useful) is nearly over. I am not weary of life, but I confess I see daily less and less reason to be greatly attached to it. Perhaps if its termination presented itself as nearer, I might discover a different feeling." Still, however, he could sympathize with those placed in happier circumstances; for, in the same letter, congratulating his friend on some favourable change in his lot, he says, "I need not tell you, my dear Sir, that when our God does much, he expects much; and that ingratitude was the great sin, and prolific source of sin in his ancient people—in David himself, in Solomon, and in Hezekiah. They remembered not what great things he had done for them, and rendered not unto him according to his benefits. Sanctified afflictions are the greatest of mercies, unsanctified deliverances the greatest of curses to an individual or a people."

In these circumstances he was prevailed upon to take a short tour to the Continent. "I sail this evening for London," he writes May 28, 1822. "Cannot say I have a great heart for the jaunt, which I take more in compliance with the urgency of others, than from my own opinion of its propriety." He sailed for Holland, landed at Rotterdam, visited the Hague, Leyden, Haerlem, Amsterdam and Utrecht, and returned home, after an absence of scarcely two months, much pleased with his journey, and "greatly benefited and recruited in his health." During his stay in Holland he preached only once, in the Scotch church at Rotterdam. Even this flying visit, however, he made subservient to his historical researches. "When on the Continent," says one who met him there, "he was so pressed for time, and so anxious to get back to his pastoral duties in Edinburgh, that the necessity he was under of copying extracts (though in this he was aided by a friend) deprived him to a great degree of his night's rest, and could not but prove extremely injurious to his health."\* When

\* Christian Instructor, October 1835, p. 672.

in Amsterdam, he had the good fortune to meet with several rare Italian works in the library of the venerable M. Chevalier, one of the pastors of the French church, "whose uncommon politeness," he says in his Preface to the Reformation in Italy, "I have to acknowledge, in not only allowing me the freest use of his books, but also in transmitting to me a number of extracts which I had not time to make during my short stay in that city."

He was particularly fond of travelling, and it is much to be regretted that he did not consider himself at liberty to indulge himself so often as his friends and his congregation would have wished, in this species of healthy relaxation. On such occasions he enjoyed a great flow of spirits, and proved the most entertaining of companions. "Dr. M'Crie," says the writer formerly quoted, "though a stickler for the Solemn League and Covenant, was in conversation perfectly free from bigotry. He could expatiate on all subjects with the liveliest freedom, and there was an exquisite humour in many of his remarks that was finely piquant and highly amusing. We travelled together for a short time on the continent, and I do not remember the time when I was more entertained or laughed so heartily. One day when examining a Protestant cathedral, which he seemed to admire much, I recalled to his remembrance what he had said in his Life of Knox about 'crows and crow-nests;' he looked surprised at the seeming censure implied in the remark, and assured me he did not wish to be understood as expressing his own sentiments on that occasion,\* and that he had no objection

\* This is so inconsistent with what we know of Dr. M'Crie, that the writer must be supposed, either to have misunderstood what he said in conversation, or to have erroneously supposed that the sentiments expressed in the Life of Knox are not quite reconcilable with those which he reports in the following part of the sentence. Dr. M'Crie tells us that "Cathedral and parochial churches, and, in several places, the chapels attached to monasteries were appropriated to the Protestant worship." But in regard to *monasteries*, or "those buildings which had served for the maintenance of the ancient superstition," he allows that "there

to these magnificent structures when not perverted to the purposes of superstition."

On his return home through England, he paid a visit to Cambridge, and spent some time in examining the library. At Leicester, he made a point of seeing the celebrated Robert Hall, for whose genius and writings, notwithstanding the wide difference of opinion between them on various points of church order, he entertained the highest admiration. The two authors had a cordial meeting, and spent the evening together in animated conversation, during which they discussed the merits of some of the popular writers and preachers of the day,—Mr. Hall, as usual, traversing the room all the while and smoking with great energy. Dr. M'Crie, in relating the interview, used to describe the astonished look of the Baptist minister when he gravely requested permission to "hold communion with him," and the alacrity with which, on discovering the joke, he rang for another pipe.†

In his occasional excursions into the country, he frequently found himself, much to his amusement, made the topic of conversation by strangers to his personal appearance—which, by the way, seldom realized the idea which people had previously formed of the author of the *Life of Knox*. The following anecdote is so characteristic, that I make no apology for introducing it. "My first meeting with Dr. M'Crie," says my informant,‡ "was somewhat singular. It was in a steam-boat on the Clyde in 1823, if I mistake not. A reverend-looking gentleman asked me some questions respecting places on the banks of

is more wisdom than many seem to perceive in the maxim which Knox is said to have inculcated, 'that the best way to keep the rooks from returning, was to pull down their nests.'"—*Life of Knox*, vol. i., pp. 725, 6.

† Dr. M'Crie was long a slave to the habit of smoking, but being persuaded that it was injuring his health, he, about this time, renounced it at once and for ever.

‡ Mr. William Muir, schoolmaster of Dysart (now presentee to Temple, Presbytery of Dalkeith.)

the river, which my familiarity with the scene enabled me to answer. As we conversed, I summoned courage, or something worse, to ask him if he was a clergyman?—he replied that he was. Like a true Scotchman I pushed my inquiry, remarking that he would be from England? The stranger, with a laugh, answered, ‘Ah no; not so far south as that—I come from Edinburgh.’ ‘From Edinburgh?’ I eagerly said. ‘Do you know, then, what Dr. M’Crie is doing? We have had no work from him for some time; is he not going to write the life of Alexander Henderson?’ ‘I do not think,’ said he, ‘that the Doctor is engaged in any particular work at present.’ I then spoke of the Doctor’s works, and his ability to execute a task of that kind, in a strain which I will not now repeat. I observed a slight flush come on the gentleman’s face as I spoke; but were I to state the thought that this gave rise to in my mind, it would be a strong proof how distant were my suspicions from the idea that I was conversing with the person of whom I was speaking. He interrupted me with the question, ‘Have you ever seen Dr. M’Crie?’ Often have I wished that I had answered this question with more caution; I might have enjoyed, at an earlier period, something of his acquaintance. I replied that I had several years ago heard him preach, and that I thought as much of him as a preacher as an historian. The stranger here abruptly left me:—the historian could hear his works praised,—the minister could not. Though introduced to him some years after this, I would not have recognised my fellow-passenger, had not the Rev. Dr. Black, to whom I owed the honour of my introduction, told me that Dr. M’Crie said to him, that he thought he had once met with me in a steam-boat on the Clyde.”

In 1822, Dr. M’Crie appeared before the public in another cause, which presented his character in a light for which few were prepared,—we refer to the successful struggles of modern Greece in asserting her long-lost independence. Noble as was the spec-

tacle of a whole nation, once so famous for its literature, laws and civilization, rousing itself from the lethargy of ages, and by the strength of its own unaided arm releasing itself from the yoke of a barbarous despotism, it was long before the public mind could be brought to feel an interest in the cause of the modern Greeks. Exaggeration and slander had been busily at work on their character, representing them as a mean, perfidious and degraded race of men, unfit for and unworthy of the blessings of freedom. At length the sympathy which their patriotism had failed to awaken, was excited by the report of their sufferings. A public meeting was called and held in Merchants' Hall, August 7, 1822, to promote a subscription for the miserable natives of the Island of Scio. At this meeting Dr. M'Crie took the lead by proposing a series of resolutions in a speech, the impression of which is still remembered by those who heard it, and the publication of which in the newspapers excited a lively interest in the cause throughout the country.\*

This, as he informed his audience, was only the third time, during a residence of twenty-six years, that he had addressed a public meeting; and the rareness with which he obtruded himself on public notice no doubt contributed to the effect of his appearance on this occasion. It is not difficult to account for the interest which he took in the cause of the patriotic Greeks. Classic associations might have had their share in it, but the general apathy shown in the Greek

\* The speech will be found in the Appendix. "A meeting,—and a most respectable meeting, has at length been held, to promote a subscription for the relief of the persecuted, enslaved, and miserable Greeks of the Island of Scio; and tardy as we have been in Edinburgh, we have yet the merit of being the first who have moved in such a good cause. The historian of our own Scottish struggles for religious and civil liberty was of all others the person who could most appropriately take the lead on such an occasion; and through him, and with him, our fellow-citizens have removed from themselves the reproach of an apathy, almost as unaccountable as it is unparalleled, to the higher interests of the human race."—*Scotsman*, Aug. 10, 1822.

cause by the literati of the age, and which met with his severe reprehension, proves how little affinity mere scholarship has with the generous impulses of patriotism and philanthropy. Along with this there was combined, in his case, ardent zeal for the cause of true religion, the success of which he always associated with the triumph of liberty and the progress of education; and this, it appears, led him to anticipate much more from those great *national movements* by which a whole people are shaken from their slumbers, and roused to inquire for themselves, provided these are met in a suitable manner by a sympathizing movement on the part of Christian and Protestant States, than from isolated exotic missionary operations, which must necessarily be confined within a limited sphere, and which, according to the most flattering calculations of their supporters, will require whole ages to accomplish their object.\* After all, the mere fact that the Greeks were struggling to get free from the degrading thralldom of a despotic and barbarous government, was sufficient to enlist all his sympathies on their side; for in his mind there burned, not merely the love of liberty, which is natural and common enough among men, but an intense and conscientious abhorrence of oppression, which would have made him shrink from enacting the baseness of the tyrant, with even a greater degree of sensitiveness, than from enduring the degradation of the slave. In

\* The reader who may wish farther satisfaction with regard to our author's sentiments on this point, may consult his Review of "Sismondi's Considerations on Geneva," in the Christian Instructor, in which he touches, though we regret rather generally, on "the relations which bind Protestant States to one another." In this review, which was written in 1813, speaking of "the Protestant interest," in opposition to the Popish, and after declaring his belief that they "will yet separate and display themselves, as soon as things return to their ordinary course;" he says, "Without pretending to any superior sagacity, or exposing ourselves to the charge of indulging in political prophecy, we may add that events may take place, at no distant period, by which the principle which we have endeavoured to establish, will be set in a practical, and, consequently, in a more clear and convincing light."

illustration of this part of his character, I may here introduce a fragment found among his manuscripts.\* —“Who would be a slave! is the exclamation of those who are themselves free, and sometimes of those who, provided they enjoy freedom themselves, care not though the whole world were in bondage. But there is a sentiment still more noble than that. Who would be a slave-dealer, a patron, an advocate for slavery! To be a slave has been the hard, but not dishonourable lot of many a good man and noble spirit. But to be a tyrant—that is disgrace! To trample on the rights of his fellow creature—to treat him, whether it be with cruelty or kindness, as a dog—to hold him in chains, when he has perpetrated or threatens no violence—to carry him with a rope about his neck, not to the scaffold, but to the market—to sell him whom God made after his own image, and whom Christ redeemed not with corruptible things as silver and gold, and by the act of transference, to tear him from his own bowels—that is disgraceful. I protest before you that I would a thousand times rather have my brow branded with the name of *Slave*, than have written on the palm of my hand, or the sole of my foot, the initial letter of the word—*Tyrant*.”

With a zeal which redounded highly to their credit, the ladies of Edinburgh took an active interest in this cause, directing their exertions, most appropriately, to the education of the long-neglected females of Greece.

To this scheme our author gave his warmest support; he preached in its behalf, conducted the correspondence, and at a meeting called with the view of forming a “Scottish Ladies’ Society for promoting education in Greece,” April 9, 1825, he again appeared to plead the cause of the Greeks. The substance of his address on this occasion will be found in the Appendix; and I am happy to escape the ne-

\* This fragment, I believe, is part of a speech which he had prepared for an anti-slavery meeting in October 1830, but which he was prevented from delivering by an unexpected turn given to the proceedings by his friend Dr. Thomson.



cessity of adding any comment of my own, by transcribing the following account of it, which, though evidently drawn by a partial pen, is, I have reason to believe, substantially correct: "Some eight or ten years ago, when Sir James Macintosh happened to be in Edinburgh, a number of philanthropic ladies in that city endeavoured very successfully, we believe, to get up a public meeting, for the purpose of establishing a society to promote female education in Greece. Of course, the claims of Greece, and the object of the society, behooved to be advocated from the platform. Sir James Macintosh, if we recollect right, had agreed to take the chair; and in canvassing for speakers on the occasion, Dr. M'Crie was applied to among others by the ladies of the committee. 'Doctor,' said our fair and excellent informant, 'we are anticipating great things at our approaching meeting. We have endeavoured to select our speakers as judiciously as possible for the sake of the cause. For all we require in the way of argument we depend upon you: and for the classical recollections of Greece, and the appeals of eloquence, we look with confidence to Sir James.' The Doctor appeared embarrassed at the inadvertent and unintentional way in which the lady had put him into contrast with the overrated senator; but, though she thought he seemed a little piqued,\* he acceded to the ladies' request, civilly bowed to them, and they retired. By-and-by came the appointed meeting, when, to the astonishment and delight of every auditor, an address was delivered by Dr. M'Crie, which, while admirably adapted to promote the popularity of the cause, seemed almost to be intended, with an innocent vindictiveness, to rebuke the pre-

\* "*He seemed a little piqued.*" The lady, I am disposed to think, misinterpreted the expression of his feelings on this occasion, as much as she had miscalculated his powers. The embarrassment which she remarked no doubt arose from the same cause that makes a man of delicacy and acuteness feel the blunders which he hears, somewhat as if he had made them himself.

concerted anticipations of the ladies as to the peculiar forte of its several supporters. Distinguished throughout by the most thorough acquaintance with the politics, philosophy, mythology and poetry of ancient Greece, it commingled with the happiest allusions to these, so fervid a contrast of her ancient glory with her modern degradation, that, new and foreign as such topics were thought to be to the habits of the good Doctor, he reminded many of his hearers of the finest speeches of Burke. The deductions of reason, the eloquence of passion, and the yearnings of the Christian, shone equally conspicuous. A more splendid out-pouring has seldom been listened to.”\*

A somewhat different misconception of the Doctor's character, and of the nature of his interest in this cause, led to a more ludicrous application for his assistance; for, some time afterward, he was one morning, much to our amusement, astounded by receiving a letter from some of the friends of the Greeks in Germany, earnestly requesting him to forward them, for the good of the cause, a supply of *Congreve rockets!*

From 1823 to 1826, Dr. M'Crie's health continued in such a precarious and unsatisfactory state, that he was obliged to suspend, almost entirely, his literary labours. In August 1824, I find him complaining, “My time is chiefly passed between fits of perspiration, and cold or rather half-cold shiverings. The work of the Sabbath is oppressive, and I don't think I can stand public duty long. I am unable, too, to prepare for it. My friends are urging me to desist for some weeks, and try the effects of relaxation. But how can I obtain this? I am sometimes tempted to wish that I might fall down altogether, that I might obtain *rest*—if that were to happen, 'tis likely my wishes would be reversed.” The wise and merciful purposes of God in afflicting his children, generally so mysterious, may be often seen developed

\* The Thistle, or Anglo-Caledonian Journal, No. II., Feb. 1836. London.

with singular clearness in the case of those personal trials which befall the public servants of Christ. It was eminently so with our author. His bodily infirmities, depressing as they were, taken in connexion with his domestic bereavement, to which was added the death of his father in March 1823, which made a deep impression on his mind, were, there is reason to think, the means of turning his attention more exclusively to the proper duties of his profession, and imparting to his Sabbath discourses a deeper unction of that rich and varied experience, which formed their chief attraction. As a lecturer, or expounder of the sacred writings, he had always been admired by the judicious; but while engaged in the composition of his larger works, his mind and time were too much engrossed by historical researches to admit of his devoting them so closely as he desired to pulpit composition. In consequence of this, he had acquired a somewhat monotonous habit of delivery, which did not set off what he had prepared to the best advantage. And yet, by the native force of his mind, he ultimately rose so far above these disadvantages, as to enjoy a considerable share of popularity. "Dr. M'Crie's style of preaching," says a critic of 1818, "is like none of the present day, and yet it is captivating: it excites no high emotion, and yet it is enticing; it is pervaded with none of that boisterous ejaculation now so common, and yet it is calculated to improve. It is set off with no outward graces of appearance, and no varied power of external eloquence, and yet his scriptural discourses are admirable. It is the matter which is brought forth, not the manner in which it is uttered, which in this instance calls attention—it is for the information which is received, not the fancy entranced, that his church is now filled. Dr. M'Crie's delivery is slow, uninviting, monotonous, never roused to what is called eloquence, even when the preacher himself is warmed with the subject he discusses. But to make amends for this, his intellect is strong, his reasonings solid, his advices are from

the heart, and his book of reference is the Scriptures.”\*

The following comes from a more graphic pen, and though somewhat overdrawn, must be allowed to present a more vivid picture of his appearance in the pulpit about this period. “I went to hear Dr. M’Crie preach, and was not disappointed in the expectations I had formed from a perusal of his book. He is a tall slender man, with a pale face, full of shrewdness, and a pair of black piercing eyes—a shade of deep secluded melancholy passing ever and anon across their surface, and dimming their brilliancy. His voice, too, has a wild but very impressive shrillness in it at times. He prays and preaches very much in the usual style of the Presbyterian divines—but about all he says there is a certain unction of sincere, old-fashioned, haughty Puritanism, peculiar, so far as I have seen, to himself, and by no means displeasing in the historian of Knox. He speaks, too, with an air of authority, which his high talents render excusable, nay, proper—but which few could venture upon with equal success.”†

The next sketch, drawn by a highly respected clerical friend,‡ in a private communication, and without any view to its being made public, exhibits Dr. M’Crie, as he appeared in the pulpit, at a much later period of his life. “When well prepared, and on a congenial theme, he rose to very great eloquence, as any one may conceive who looks into the volume of his discourses which was published under your eye some years ago. His manner at first was somewhat constrained—the effect probably of native diffidence, heightened by an habitual reference to a high standard of excellence. As he proceeded, this in a great measure wore off; and in certain passages where he was deeply moved himself, he had the complete mastery

\* The Pulpit Eloquence of Edinburgh, in the Portfolio, a weekly paper on Criticism and Manners. Edin. 1818.

† Peter’s Letters to his Kinsfolk, vol. iii., p. 102. Edin. 1819.

‡ Dr. Charles Watson, late minister of Burntisland.

of his audience. A certain tone of simplicity, contrasting strongly with the sagacity and depth of his reflections, gave a delightful charm to his eloquence, relieving its nobler and more imposing features, and imparting to the wisdom that accompanied it, much of the effect of unexpectedness and novelty. A stranger might for a time have mistaken him in the pulpit for one of those simple good men, whose worth forms their chief qualification for usefulness. Little by little, however, the stream of thought widened and flowed with an accelerated current, and flashes of fancy and eddies of feeling might be seen on its surface, enough to disturb the first impression,—till it was entirely lost in admiration at some affecting stroke of pathos, or some bold burst of expostulation or entreaty, after the highest models of a school whose date is to be sought a century or two back, but which is too true to nature ever to wax obsolete or lose its charm.”

These extracts refer exclusively to his *manner* as a preacher; there is another point of view, in which he might have been described, infinitely more important, and involving what he himself regarded as the highest praise of a Christian pastor—his success in the winning of souls, and in promoting the spiritual peace and profit of his hearers, on which I would more willingly dilate. In the general strain of his preaching, I would say that he addressed himself more *directly* to the edification and comfort of the believer, than to the conversion of the unbeliever,—dwelling more on the allurements of the love of God, than on the terrors of his law. But his art seemed to lie in reaching conviction to the sinner, while apparently engaged in ministering consolation to the child of God. Without looking the skeptic in the face, or professing to reason with him, he spoke to the humble and simple Christian in such a manner as to convey the severest of all rebukes to the man of opposite character. Preaching, as he did, from the promptings of his own heart-experience, as

well as from his general knowledge of human nature, his discourses found a response in the breasts of many of his hearers, and frequently produced that searching and startling effect which, to the awakened mind, conveys the idea that the preacher is acquainted with the whole history of the person's exercise, and has purposely adapted the message of the day to his particular case. Many, there is reason to believe, were brought under serious impressions, led to the Saviour, and "guided into the way of peace," by waiting on his ministry; these results being obtained, in most cases, not by any single discourse, but by the general strain of his preaching, particularly by the free unfettered exhibition of the grace of God in the Gospel, contrasted with the vileness and ingratitude of the sinner. Testimonials to the truth of this might easily have been obtained in abundance. The following spontaneous effusion of gratitude may stand in place of a thousand; for it expresses, I am persuaded, the sentiments and feelings of all who enjoyed his ministry:—

"I can say, with gratitude, that I received much spiritual benefit from his clear elucidation of the Scriptures. And though I had, for many years previous to sitting under his ministry, been awakened to anxiety about the safety of my soul, and to the knowledge of the way of salvation; it was through his instrumentality that I obtained peace in believing. His preaching was indeed the searching of the heart by the word of God, and a clear setting forth of Christ as the only way of salvation, the only rock on which a sinner can build, the only hope of a lost and ruined soul. And, in saying this, I do not express merely my own experience of his public teaching, but that also of many of my friends and acquaintances who were in the habit of hearing him frequently, and who resorted to his church for no other motive than to have their souls fed and nourished by the word of life. I felt his preaching well calculated to drive from every strong-hold of sin, and I do think, I can say

that under him, the *power* of sin was weakened in my soul, and a stronger desire after divine things enkindled. I felt bound to him, not only by his usefulness in public, but by his faithful admonitions in private. There also he carried the spirit of a heavenly guide, and what he saw to be wrong was pointed out with affectionate faithfulness. The good of souls was his aim in public and in private. Many a time, when under severe affliction, did my weary soul find the word of peace from his lips, and the heavy load of sin removed by his leading me to the cross of Christ."

The peculiar temperament of a preacher may be ascertained, with considerable accuracy, from those Scripture characters on whom he chiefly delights to dwell, and to whose sentiments he is disposed to recur, for authority or illustration, with the most manifest partiality. There can be no doubt that Dr. Mc'Crie's favourite characters (if I may be allowed the expression) were Jeremiah among the prophets, and Paul among the apostles. In the earlier part of his ministry, he lectured through the Prophecies and the Lamentations of Jeremiah; and all who were in the habit of hearing him, and are familiar with his writings, must have observed the frequency of his allusions to the language, and the general similarity of his tone of sentiment to that of "the weeping prophet." We discover the same plaintive melancholy pervading his reflections on the signs of the times,—the same severe, and at times sarcastic, indignation at human treachery and worthlessness,—the same deferential submission to the righteous awards of an avenging Providence. He was partial, indeed, to the study of the Old Testament as a whole; he wrote much in illustration of its text, and in vindication of its authority as a standing rule of Christian conduct; his library was stored with commentators on it; and he lectured through the greater part of its books. His lectures on its historical portions—the books of Kings, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther and Daniel—which were begun in 1825—excited gene-

ral attention, and attracted numbers, of all denominations, to his church. In illustrating these sacred records, his talent for historical description shone conspicuous; and many remember with delight his lively pictures, his bursts of genuine passion, and his striking lessons of practical wisdom, while he traced, with a kindred spirit, the history of the sublime heroism of Elijah, the patriotism of Nehemiah, or the piety of Daniel.\*

I may here mention another study, intimately connected with his province as an expositor, in which he took great delight, and in which, had his time permitted, he bid fair to have excelled—Biblical Criticism. Familiarly acquainted with the most learned philological and critical writers, both at home and abroad, he had devoted himself to the practical department of the study to such an extent, that it was hardly possible to start a real difficulty in the interpretation of Scripture for which he was not prepared; and, at one time, he had prosecuted his researches into hermeneutics, or the science of interpretation, so far as to contemplate a work on the subject. Speaking of *Ernesti* to one of his correspondents, he says,—“Although not a work which I could recommend in all its parts, especially in the notes added by *Ammon*, it is one of those books which I like to have beside me for occasional consultation. Besides, if I fail in persuading you, or any other able person, to undertake the task, I am not altogether without thoughts of attempting something myself towards an English work of a similar description, which I still

\* I have given the public a specimen of these lectures, in those upon the book of *Esther*. The manuscripts of his other lectures are left, I am sorry to say, in a state too imperfect for publication—at least in the form of a regular series on any book, or even extended portion of history. To publish them as they stand, would neither do justice to his memory, nor give satisfaction to the reader, who would want some of the richest thoughts which gave them animation in the delivery, but which were left to be clothed in language premeditated in the closet or suggested in the pulpit. The same remark applies to his *Lectures on the Gospel by Luke*. All his other lectures have been destroyed.



think a grand desideratum. This, however, I mean to do gradually. I may afterwards prevail on some individual to take my materials off my hand and to finish the design. This notification may perhaps alarm you (I am sure it *ought* to alarm you) for the credit of this important branch of biblical criticism. Only think, I beseech you, what must be the consequences, if one whose thoughts have been so long occupied with inquiries so very different, whose time is broken by so many engagements and interruptions, and who has only touched the extensive task *primulis tabellulis*,—if he shall take it up in despair, and disgrace at once himself and the subject! In spite, however, of all the sage laws of *quid valeant humeri*, &c., I am afraid that he will do it, unless you interpose.” He accordingly commenced a translation of Ernesti, to which, I suppose, he had intended to add notes; but he never found time to digest his thoughts into the form of a work. In 1814, he exerted himself to form a society composed of ministers of various denominations, for mutual improvement in this department of theological learning; and for procuring rare and costly works on the subject. A library was established, which still exists, though, I am sorry to add, in a very neglected and languishing condition. Its fate illustrates the situation of town ministers in regard to study. Dr. M’Crie, to whom the charge of the library was for some time committed, used to observe, that after the public movements in missionary and other associations of a similar kind were introduced, scarcely a book was called for by a minister, their time being occupied and their attention engaged by other matters. The study, however, soon became a favourite one with himself; and had he adhered to it, there is reason to think that his powers of research and application, with his sagacity and discernment, would have conducted him to no inconsiderable eminence and usefulness as a sacred critic. A liberal offer was made to him by the Edinburgh ministers to give a series of lectures on biblical criticism and sub-

jects connected with it. Emolument, however, had never any power of temptation with him, and his mind clung to the line of study and authorship with which he had set out. The society soon fell off, but not before our author had read to them several essays (the only ones, we believe, that were ever produced before them,) of which the surviving members still speak in high terms. The topics of these essays were—"The Necessity and Advantages of Biblical Interpretation,"—"The Types of Scripture,"—and "The Revival of Oriental Literature." In 1835, he threw the substance of the first of these essays into the form of an article on Biblical Interpretation in the March number of the Presbyterian Review. These Essays, together with an important, though unfinished, paper on the Validity of Old Testament Instruction, and other fugitive pieces of criticism, may be afterwards published.

The following communication from Sir George Sinclair, on the subject of union with the Established Church (which recent events have rendered an interesting topic,) formed the commencement of a correspondence and friendship with that amiable and truly excellent person, highly gratifying to both parties, and which continued till our author's death.

"To the Rev. Dr. M'Cric.

"THURSO CASTLE, *March 10, 1824.*

"REVEREND SIR.—You may perhaps deem it extraordinary that a stranger should use the freedom to address you. But your character, talents and usefulness, are known and admired by many who do not enjoy the advantage of your personal acquaintance,—and your triumphant vindication of our great national Reformer's character, will endear your name to succeeding generations of your countrymen, as well as to those of the present day. Having imbibed from my father (the author of the Statistical Account of Scotland) a sincere and cordial attachment to our national church, I have often contemplated with deep

regret the lamentable schisms by which her peace and unity have been rent; and it is a subject to me of surprise, as well as of sorrow, that no endeavours have (as far as I know) been lately made, to heal the breaches in our Zion, and cause us to be 'of one accord, and of one mind.' I cannot but think, that the present would be a favourable moment for trying the experiment. So many years have now elapsed, since the original separation of the Secession from the Established Church, and so many of the controverted points have, in some degree been, or might now more easily be, set at rest, and the pure doctrines of the Gospel are so much more generally preached than when the unfortunate division took place, that a door seems now to be opened for the auspicious restoration of harmony and peace. Now, my dear Sir, (you will pardon the familiarity of the phrase)—it appears to me, that you, who are a 'burning and shining light' in the Presbyterian communion, might very beneficially use your influence, and lend your aid, for effecting this important purpose. As some difficulty would probably arise in endeavouring to determine from what quarter the first overture should proceed, I would humbly and diffidently suggest, that meetings should be held, or a correspondence take place, for considering this subject, between yourself, assisted by one of your brethren, with the same number of ministers of the Established Church, and also of the other denominations into which the Secession has, perhaps unnecessarily as well as unfortunately, been subdivided. Should the unauthorized 'labour of love' undertaken by such a committee, lead to no favourable result, the public attention need never be called to its details, or even to its existence. But if such a basis could, through the blessing of God, and the direction of his Spirit, be devised, as might lead to all parties being spiritually of one heart and of one soul, and none saying that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, 'but they had all things common'—one faith,

and one baptism, one creed and one discipline—the whole proceedings might be laid before the different Synods and General Assemblies, for their modification and approval. In this case, the Secession places of worship, wherever they now exist, might become connected with the Established Church. We should then see labourers in the Lord's vineyard, who now view each other with jealousy and estrangement, co-operating with heart and hand in winning souls to Christ.

“Alas! is it not painful to reflect that many who ‘love the Lord Jesus in sincerity’ feel no kindly fellowship and love towards each other—that not a few would rather debar themselves for months, or even years, from the privilege of public worship, than hear the Gospel preached in simplicity and faithfulness by a minister of a different denomination from their own—although I believe that a stranger might for twelve succeeding Sabbaths, hear yourself every morning, Dr. A. Thomson every afternoon, and Mr. Paxton at night, without being able to discover any difference in your doctrine or form of worship. If the labours of such a committee as I have ventured to recommend, were to commence by the adoption of a preliminary synopsis of the principles on which all are agreed, I would fain hope that the points of difference which are of far inferior moment and magnitude might, by a Christian spirit of forbearance and charity, be adjusted.

“I need not, I am persuaded, offer any apology for addressing you on this subject. I have, and indeed can have but one motive, which, I trust, will plead my excuse, if my suggestion be ill-timed or ill-advised. I remain, with much esteem, and every good wish, Reverend Sir, your faithful humble servant,

“GEORGE SINCLAIR.”

“To George Sinclair, Esquire of Ulbster.

“EDINBURGH, *May 19, 1824.*

“DEAR SIR,—Your letter of the 10th March

reached me only a few days ago. I thank you heartily for the free manner in which you have imparted your views and feelings on a subject which evidently interests you deeply, and the intrinsic importance of which you cannot easily overrate. No one can be more sensibly affected than I am at the lamentable schisms by which the Christian body is rent, and the numerous parties into which the friends of evangelical truth and Presbyterian discipline are divided. Though we might differ in opinion as to the causes of the evil, yet I fully sympathize with you in deploring its existence. I deplore it as productive of effects hurtful to the temper of individuals, hardening to the minds of the enemies of religion, and tending in many ways to prevent or to paralyze efforts in behalf of the common cause of Christianity. Nor does my mind find proper relief in the consideration by which many console themselves—that the several parties both check and stimulate one another, that the spirit of asperity which formerly prevailed has abated and worn down, and that Christians of all denominations now co-operate in associations (such as the Bible Society) for promoting general purposes connected with Christianity. I do not expect that “things will go well” in our land, or that there will be a general revival of religion, or even reformation of manners, and it is my apprehension, that, notwithstanding any present favourable symptoms, and all exertions made by separate churches and voluntary societies, irreligion and infidelity and crime will continue to advance among us,—until an effective and uncrippled co-operation be established among the genuine friends of religion in the way of their becoming, like the primitive Christians, one body and one soul, and until there be, to use your expression, “one faith, one baptism, one creed and one discipline.” After expressing such views, you may think yourself entitled to expect that I should be ready to accede to your request; and certainly I would be self-condemned, or at least inconsistent with myself, if I refused to lend

my aid to farther any scheme of a scriptural and practicable kind, for uniting Presbyterians in Scotland. That I am strongly attached to the Church of Scotland, I believe I need scarcely assure you; and I might add that circumstances have occurred to me in adorable Providence, which have long ago relieved and emancipated my mind from any bigoted attachment to any party which I might once have felt, though I by no means lay claim to exemption from the influence of prejudice in favour of the opinions which I have formed. I stand in no connexion which hinders me from joining in any union which has for its object and tendency the maintenance of the genuine principles of the Church of Scotland: nor do I think that all who join in such a union should be perfectly agreed on all points, and that they need not forbear with one another in certain things which they cannot view in the same light. Notwithstanding this, I am obliged to add, that I have not been able to discover any plan, by which, in the present state of things and of men's minds, the union of the Established Church of Scotland and Seceders could be effected on sound principles, or attempted with the least reasonable probability of success. As to the quarter from which the proposals should first come—that is a point of no difficulty with me. If other things were clear, the person or party which should make the first advances would, in my opinion, secure the post of honour instead of incurring disgrace. Nor does it strike me that there would be required any “synopsis of principles,” while the Confession of Faith and other Standards of the Church of Scotland remain. The great desideratum is not a declared or authorized system of principles, but a real and practical adherence to it, and an administration which would promise to secure this.

“What you state, by way of supposition, with respect to those preachers mentioned in your letter, may be perfectly true. But, my dear Sir, permit me to say that my friend Dr. A. Thomson is in ec-

clesiastical connexion and fellowship with brethren who preach very different doctrine from what he preaches; and there it is that the difficulty pinches. I rejoice that, of late, the number of evangelical and pious ministers in the Church of Scotland has increased, though I am not prepared to say that "the pure doctrines of the Gospel are more generally preached than when the unfortunate division took place;" but I suppose it will be admitted that those who are understood not to preach the Gospel with the greatest purity, have uniformly or at least generally the sway in the Church Courts; and I need not state to you that it is the general impression, both within and without the Church, that it is now an almost hopeless task to procure the conviction in the General Assembly of a minister who may be chargeable with error in doctrine, or various pieces of immorality in practice. You know, too, that the question of Patronage is intimately connected with the origin and grounds of the Secession. It is true, I believe, as stated by your venerable father, in a pamphlet which he has done me the honour to send me, that no party in the Church is disposed to revive a controversy which seems to have been set at rest in her. But I know of no alteration which has taken place in the sentiments of Seceders on that head; and I apprehend that the better part of them in numbers, or at least in seriousness, would not, even though the freedom of election was granted to their own congregations, enter into fellowship with a Church whose judicatories would force presentees upon reluctant and reclaiming congregations.

"I beg you to excuse the prolixity of this letter; but I deemed it more respectful as well as honest to state to you my sentiments, rather than politely to evade your request.—I am, my dear Sir, with much respect and esteem, your faithful humble servant,

"THO. M'CRIE."

Such were the views which he entertained, at this

period, on the question of union with the Established Church. The rapid improvement which has since taken place in that Church, has removed, to a great extent, the grounds of objection stated in the above letter; but, as we shall afterwards see, there were other difficulties in the way of this desirable union, rendering the prospect still more unlikely in his eyes, which he did not consider it necessary to explain to his interesting correspondent.\*

In 1827, as was formerly stated, he had the satisfaction of reuniting with those of his former brethren who, dissatisfied with the union of the Burgher and Antiburgher Synods in 1820, had formed themselves into a separate Synod, generally known by the name of Protesters. Seldom has any union been so happily effected, without any compromise of principle on either side. The two parties, who found themselves

\* At a meeting of the Anti-Patronage Society, January 30, 1833, at which Sir George Sinclair presided, Dr. M'Crie, referring to the Chairman, observed, "I am forcibly reminded by the transactions of this day, of that which commenced our acquaintance, and when I mention it, you will not think that I am entertaining you with private history, or forgetting the business for which you are met. It was a letter which he addressed to me several years ago, and in which, after adverting to the marked improvement of the National Church in point of evangelical doctrine, and to the harmony of views which existed between myself and another person for whom our love has since, by the sovereign disposal of Heaven, been converted into a holy and solemn regret (Dr. Thomson,) he proposed the serious question,—Can nothing be done to bring into closer connexion the friends of religion in the Establishment and in the Secession? I answered the letter respectfully, and I trust, without any of the leaven of sour sectarian jealousy, but with the characteristic caution of a Scotsman, taking due care not to pledge myself deeply; and, among other things, mentioning, that, in my opinion, no improvements which had taken place and no arrangements which might be made, would heal the breach, so long as that yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear, remained on the neck of the Christian people of Scotland. Little did I then think that I should this day be standing on these boards, and moving thanks to my honourable friend for the manly, decided, and truly Christian part, which he has acted on this important and soon-to-be absorbing question. His reply, bearing with the cold, if not repulsive air of my answer, led to an acquaintance which I, at least, have no ground to regret."



contending materially for the same grand truths—those of the Covenanted Reformation—soon came to a mutual understanding, and agreed on certain articles in which the points on which they had been supposed to differ, instead of being dropped or evaded, were broadly and distinctly stated, in such a way as to remove all past and prevent all future misunderstandings. A new Testimony, or declaration of public principles, embodying these articles, was then drawn up, on the ground of which the Constitutional Presbytery and the Associate Synod of Protesters, cordially and unanimously merged into one society, on the 18th of May 1827, under the name of the Associate Synod of Original Seceders—a designation intended to denote that they stood precisely on the same ground with that occupied by the first Seceders from the Church of Scotland. To Dr. M'Crie, his brethren award the honour (we do not say of having accomplished this union, for others are equally entitled to that, but) of having conducted it to such a happy issue, and settled it on such a satisfactory basis. The historical part of the Testimony was entirely the production of his pen; and when we consider not only the minute acquaintance with the history of ecclesiastical transactions necessary to such a task, but the extreme delicacy required to pass judgment on the various differences which have unhappily arisen among Presbyterians, this work may well be regarded as one of his most important undertakings, even by those who may not be prepared to subscribe to it as an ecclesiastical document. His whole management in this affair is entitled to the highest praise. Deeply convinced that no union can be either pleasant or profitable, or conducive to the interests of truth, which is founded on a compromise of public principle, he was careful to avoid all ambiguous expressions, and all attempts at smothering the truth, or smoothing over error; and yet in matters on which the Word of God had pronounced no judgment, or which might be considered of personal

or party concern, no one was more ready to yield to his brethren. On this principle he steadily refused to exact or to receive from his former associates any acknowledgment of the illegality or severity of the sentences passed by the General Synod against himself and his brethren of the Constitutional Presbytery. The honour of the truth was all that he cared to vindicate: his own he left in the hands of his Divine Master.

About the same time he began to devote himself more than ever to the task of pulpit preparation. He transcribed several sermons, chiefly on some of the leading characters of Scripture, with the view of forming a volume for the press. Other avocations, and his own extreme diffidence in his talent for this species of composition, prevented him from carrying this design into execution; the sermons which he transcribed were published, however, in a posthumous volume, in 1836; and I have no reason to repent having offered them to the public. His health and spirits gradually improved: and his domestic happiness was enhanced by a second marriage, having united himself, in the end of 1827, with Mary, fourth daughter of his venerable friend and fellow-labourer, the Rev. Robert Chalmers of Haddington.

To return to his historical labours,—in May 1825 we find him editing the “Memoirs of Mr. William Veitch and George Brysson, written by themselves,” from manuscripts which had been put into his hands with a view to publication. To these narratives he prefixed brief biographical notices, and appended illustrative notes. “Some,” he observes in the preface, “may be of opinion that unnecessary pains have been taken in the editing of this work; but having undertaken the publication of these memorials, and considering them to be valuable, I reckoned it incumbent on me to do them as much justice as possible. With a little more labour, a connected history of the period might have been produced, but I am persuaded that no account which I could draw up

would present so graphic a picture of the men and measures of that time, as is exhibited in the following historical pieces. The reader has an opportunity of listening to persons who describe scenes which they witnessed and in which they bore a part more or less distinguished. Agreeing in their religious and political sentiments, they were placed in very different situations: one of them being an ecclesiastic, another a military man, a third a private gentleman, and a fourth a farmer and a merchant at different periods of his life." "Brysson's Memoir is by far the best written of the whole; and indeed, it appears to me to be a master-piece of the kind for unaffected simplicity and the natural picturesque in historical description."

After all, however, one cannot help regretting that the labour expended on the editing of these obscure memoirs had not been devoted to "a connected history of the period." They are interesting, certainly, as affording us some insight into the private history of the period; but one is vexed to see such sketches framed and ornamented at an expense of time and toil which might have served to produce an original painting, embracing the whole field, and concentrating its most important features in a connected piece. The reader is disappointed, too, on finding so few of the editor's own sentiments even in the brief Notices which are prefixed to the narratives, and which chiefly consist of facts relating to the individuals. Among the rare exceptions to this rule, are the following reflections, which occur in his Notices of James Ure, in reference to the extreme opinions of Hamilton and his party, a main cause of the lamentable failure at Bothwell Bridge: and which, as being the only record of his sentiments on an interesting question, may be here transcribed:—"Another remark is suggested by the facts here referred to. If ministers of the Gospel would preserve their usefulness and respectability, they must guard their independence on the side of the people as well as of civil rulers. Pro-

vided they become "the servants of men," it matters not much whether their masters wear a crown or a bonnet; and if, instead of going before the people to point out to them the path of duty, and checking them when they are ready to run into extremes, they wait to receive directions from them, and suffer themselves to be borne along by the popular stream, the consequences cannot fail to be fatal to both. Firm and tenacious of his purpose, the servant of the Lord, while gentle to all, ought to hold on the even tenour of his way, unmoved equally by the frown of the tyrant, the cry of the multitude, and dictates of forward individuals, good and well-meaning men it may be, but who "cannot see afar off," and just need the more to be led that they think themselves capable of being leaders. An opposite conduct on the part of two or three ministers tended to foster those extravagant opinions and practices adopted by some Presbyterians at this period, which discredited the cause for which they appeared, and which their best friends, though they may excuse, will not be able to defend, and should not seek to vindicate."\*

"Perhaps," he says to one of his friends, in February 1826, "you may wish to know what I am doing in my study? Idling. One word expresses the whole, providing your inquiry relates, as the ordinary inquiries do, to literary labours. For some years I have confined my studies almost entirely to preparations for the pulpit, and it was my desire—my earnest desire to continue to do so, even more exclusively and entirely than I have lately done. This, however, I find to be impracticable, and therefore I must, though with inexpressible reluctance, alter my course. Excuse me from saying more at present." He alludes here to his proposed work on the "History of the Progress and Suppression of the Reformation in Italy," which appeared in May 1827. "A con-

\* *Memoirs of Veitch, &c.*, pp. 453, 454.

siderable number of years has elapsed," he says in the Preface, "since I was convinced that the reformed opinions had spread to a much greater extent in Italy than is commonly supposed. This conviction I took an opportunity of making public, and, at the same time expressed a wish that some person who had leisure would pursue the inquiry, and fill up what I considered as a blank in the History of the Reformation.\* Hearing of none who was willing to accept the invitation, I lately resolved to arrange the materials relating to the subject which had occurred to me in the course of my reading, with the addition of such facts as could be discovered by a more careful search into the most probable sources of information."

The chief defect of this work as a composition, is its presenting to us its numerous notices of distinguished characters, as it were, by piecemeal. "We meet," says one of its reviewers, "with the *disjecta membra heroum*; which we are obliged to combine into a whole, as well as we can, by the help of an imperfect index. It is easy to see how the author has fallen into this mismanagement, which divides, and thus weakens the impression of his sketches. Where a character lives and figures throughout the greater part of a history, it is natural and proper that

\* "I had once intended drawing up an account of 'the Reformation in Italy,' but laid aside the design owing to other engagements, and not being able to procure all the information I could have wished; and it will give me great pleasure if these hints (which he has given in the note) shall excite some person to undertake the task, who has more leisure, and better access to materials."—(*Life of Knox*, vol. ii., p. 309, note, 2d edition.) To this design I find Mr. Bruce referring so far back as April 1814, with a hope that it "would not be finally laid aside." "It is matter of gratitude to God," says a late writer, "that the eminent biographer of Knox was spared, not only to write the *Life of Melville*, and other works connected with the Reformation of his native land, but also to revert to what he here tells us he had laid aside, and to confer on the universal Church such a valuable boon as that conveyed by his two most original and delightful works, the *History of the Reformation*, not in Italy only, but also in Spain."—(*Christian Instructor*, March 1838, p. 100.)

he should thus come gradually before the reader, according to the regular succession of events; but where a number of persons are to be presented, of whom no one takes a leading part, and the accounts of whom amount, after all, only to detached notices, we conceive that another method is to be adopted; and that the author's judgment and address should be shown in selecting the proper places at which to introduce the substance of the entire information which he has to offer concerning them, respectively, in their rise, their period of service, and their close."\* These remarks appear to be equally judicious and applicable to the present work; and of this none could be more sensible than the author himself. "Its unpromising character," he observes in one of his letters, "and its unconnected, anecdotal form, after all the labour I could bestow upon it, I was aware of, but felt a strong desire after all to do some justice to the subject. Perhaps my zeal is to be accounted for by the maxim of the Roman satirist, *Quod tu scias nihil est, nisi te scire alter sciat*†—or something like that." It is certainly more "easy to see how the author has fallen into this mismanagement," than it would be to attempt an improvement in a work of such peculiar difficulty;‡ but we cannot help regretting that the notices of such characters as Curio, Carnesecchi, Paleario, Ochino, and Olympia Morata, had not been given as connected episodes. Even as they stand, they form the main attractions of the work: they have been frequently quoted; and such was the interest excited in particular by the account of the pious, learned, and

\* Christian Observer, August 1827.

† "It is nothing for you to know any thing, unless another know that you know it."

‡ The difficulties of the work may be estimated, when it is considered that the author had to trace the introduction, progress and suppression of the reformed opinions into no less than twenty-five different Italian States, which he has done in so many distinct, and, in fifteen cases, particular accounts of each; and that there was no single hero of sufficient importance to give unity, no combined national movements to give cohesion to the story.

amiable Olympia, in the congenial breast of a modern authoress, that she was induced to inquire more narrowly into her history, which led to a correspondence with our author, and issued in the publication of an interesting biography of the Italian heroine.\*

“The volume,” says the reviewer already quoted, “is highly literary. In some parts religion will be thought, perhaps, to be rather overlaid, and in a measure hidden, by literature; while the author has sometimes rather excited longings than satisfied them, by adverting to devout passages, ‘to which he knows nothing superior,’ and letters full of pious ‘unction,’ of which he has allowed us but scantily to taste with him. His is one of the few volumes which might have been advantageously extended, by additions from such sources. Dr. M’Crie’s reflections are not frequent or copious, but they are just and weighty, and proceed upon the soundest principles.” Our author, however, always disliked the practice of spiritualizing historical events; and if we may judge from the failure of late attempts of this nature, he was right: a history, it seems, must be just a history, and a sermon just a sermon; the combination of the two, like that of religion in a novel, is sure to spoil both. Dr. M’Crie’s partiality to the subject of this history induced him to bestow great pains on the second edition, which appeared in June 1833, with considerable enlargements.

The “Reformation in Italy” has excited considerable interest on the continent. It has been translated into French, German and Dutch.† It was proba-

\* “Olympia Morata, her Times, Life, and Writings, by the author of ‘Selwyn,’ ‘Mornings with Mamma,’ ‘Probation,’ ‘Tales of the Moors,’ &c. The author of these pages knows not how the discovery may have affected others, more learned, more callous, or more philosophical than herself; but it was with a sense of strange and spirit-stirring emotion, that she first gathered, from the valuable work of her countrymen, Dr. M’Crie, how bright, though brief a ray, the beacon light of the blessed Reformation, once shed over now, alas! universally benighted Italy,” *Olympia Morata*, p. 1.

† The French translation was published anonymously, at Paris, in 1831. It is well executed. The author of the Dutch trans-

bly owing to these versions, and the fear of its being translated into Italian, that the court of Rome lately did this work the honour of inserting it in the *Index Expurgatorius*. It could hardly be expected that so faithful a tale of "Protestant tears and Popish triumphs," would escape the lynx-eyed inquisitors of Rome; the wonder is, that, with such proofs of the unaltered spirit of that religion, as displayed at headquarters, any should allow themselves to be duped with the fair professions of liberality, made by its emissaries who are prosecuting the war, on other tactics, in the enemy's country.

"Italy" was succeeded, in October 1829, by a similar work on "The Progress and Suppression of the Reformation in Spain, in the Sixteenth Century." "The following work," he says in the Preface, "is a sequel to that which I lately published on the Reformation in Italy, and completes what I intended as a contribution to that memorable revolution in the sixteenth century, which, in a greater or less degree, affected all the nations of Europe. More than twenty years have elapsed since I inserted, in a periodical work, a short account of the introduction of the reformed opinions into Spain, and the means employed to extirpate them. The scanty materials from which that sketch was formed have gradually increased in the course of subsequent reading and research."

The periodical here referred to was the *Christian Magazine*, and the account was comprised in the two sketches already referred to, (p. 150,) the first of

lation is the Rev. William Nicholas Munting, one of the ministers of Leyden, who has also translated Dr. M'Crie's "History of the Reformation in Spain," and added several valuable notes to his version of both works. I may add, on the authority of my friend Dr. Steven, (late of the Scots Church, Rotterdam,) that Mr. Munting has done his part most satisfactorily, and that the public have already so far encouraged the undertaking by the purchase of a considerable impression. Of *Italy*, there have been two editions in Dutch. In a catalogue of new German publications, dated 1836, is a German translation of Dr. M'Crie's "History of the Reformation in Spain," with notes and a preface by Messrs. Plieninger and Bauer, published at Stuttgart.



which appeared in November 1803, twenty-six years before the publication of his present work on the Reformation in Spain. It is remarkable that the Reformation in Spain should have been the first subject on which he employed his historical pen, and which induced him to prosecute such researches, and that it should have been the last historical work which he gave to the public.

The Reformation produced so little impression on Spain—its early promise was so speedily crushed by the iron gripe of the inquisition—the interval was so brief between the partial opening in the cloud that had enveloped that country for centuries, and its closing again in darkness and blood—that less general interest has been excited by the history of its progress and suppression, than might have been expected from the novelty of the subject, and the thrilling though painful character of its details. It is probable that the real interest and importance of this history will not be developed or felt, till time has brought about changes in the political and ecclesiastical state of that ill-fated country which will open its eyes to the benefits of the Reformation. This the author himself seems to anticipate in his closing reflections. “We are not to conclude that the Spanish martyrs threw away their lives and spilt their blood in vain. They offered to God a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour. Their blood is precious in his sight; he has avenged it, and may yet more signally avenge it. They left their testimony for truth in a country where it had been eminently opposed and outraged. That testimony has not altogether perished. Who knows what effects the record of what they dared and suffered may yet, through the divine blessing, produce upon that unhappy nation, which counted them as the filth and offscouring of all things, but was not worthy of them?”\*

The following reflections appended by Dr. M'Crie

\* History of the Reformation in Spain, p. 345.

to this history, had struck him at the commencement of his historical career, in 1803, and their soundness, it appears, was confirmed by all his subsequent investigations. The importance which he attached to them, as well as the prevalence of the opposite sentiment, seems to justify their insertion in these memoirs.

“The fate of the Reformation in Spain, as well as Italy, teaches us not to form hasty and rash conclusions respecting a course of proceedings on which Providence, for inscrutable reasons, may sometimes be pleased to frown. The common maxim that ‘the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church,’ was remarkably verified in the primitive ages of Christianity; but we must distinguish what is effected by the special interposition and extraordinary blessing of Heaven, from what will happen according to the ordinary course of events. In the nature of things, it cannot but operate as a great, and with multitudes as an insuperable obstacle to the reception of the truth, that, in following the dictates of their conscience, they must expose themselves to every species of worldly evil; and persecution may be carried to such a pitch as will, without a miracle, crush the best of causes; for though it cannot eradicate the truth from the minds of those by whom it has been cordially embraced, it may cut off all the ordinary means of communication by which it is propagated. Accordingly, history shows that true religion has been not only excluded, but banished, for ages, from extensive regions of the globe, by oppressive laws and a tyrannical administration.”\*

\* Reformation in Spain, p. 343. In a note, he refutes the well-known sentiment of Andrew Fuller, which has often been echoed of late—“that when Christians have resorted to the sword in order to resist persecution for the Gospel’s sake, they have *perished* by it, that is, they have been overcome by their enemies, and exterminated; whereas in cases where their only weapons have been the blood of the Lamb and the Word of their testimony, loving not their lives to the death, they have overcome.” Both parts of this assertion, the author shows, are contradicted by

It has often been regretted that, instead of prosecuting these remote and foreign researches, Dr. M'Cric did not bring down, to a later period, the history of the Reformation in his native country. At one time, as we have already seen, he contemplated this; but several reasons conspired to prevent him from finishing the design. The extraordinary efforts which the Lives of Knox and Melville had cost him, shattered his strength and exhausted his spirits, to such a degree as to deter him from prosecuting an undertaking which, in his eye, threatened to be no less laborious. He was incapable of treating any subject superficially; and the very extent of his acquaintance with the immense mass of conflicting materials with which he would have to deal, in treating the history of the Second Reformation, made him shrink with the more repugnance from the prospect of encountering it. In the cases of Italy and Spain, the difficulties, though far from trifling, were more easily surmounted. He had collected a multitude of facts, and he took pleasure in arranging them into a narrative. Besides, to tell the truth, though he would never allow himself to be an antiquary, in the ordinary sense of that term,—a class indeed for whom he expressed no small contempt,—yet he was fond of that species of literary adventure, which delights in investigating the unknown regions of the world of history, exploring sources of information to which few have access, and from thence collecting materials which might serve to illustrate long-neglected worth, or to vindicate much-injured innocence.\* This, doubtless, had its

history. "The truth is, that the Albigenses, &c., who resisted, were *not exterminated*; while the Italian and Spanish Protestants, who did not resist, met with that fate."

\* "I have launched out into a sea," he writes to a friend, "by trying to explore the *terra incognita* of the early history of the Spanish Church. I think I have made some discoveries, that is, I flatter myself in this. If you say, Who will care for them? my answer must be in the sublime of Medea, *Egomel*." "Like you," writes Mr. Bruce to him in 1814, "I feel a strong propensity to hunt after something new, or to gratify the mind by a rapid change of my ideas in reading, rather than to settle long to composition on a particular subject."

share in attracting him to Italy and Spain. And it may be here mentioned, as a proof of his determination to overcome the difficulties of the task, that in order to consult his authorities in the original languages, he made himself master, at a late period of his life, of the Italian and the Spanish. In the former language, he made considerable proficiency: the German he had acquired at an earlier period.

While thus engaged in tracing the blood-stained annals of Protestantism in foreign lands, and exposing the essentially cruel and intolerant character of Popery, we may easily conceive with what feelings of grief and alarm he witnessed the progress of the Bill introduced by Government in 1829, for admitting Roman Catholics into places of power and trust. On this momentous question, as we have seen, his sentiments were most decided. None could be more opposed than he, both on principle and from feeling, to persecution for conscience' sake. Of this he gave a sufficient proof by taking an active interest in petitioning for the abolition of the Test and Corporation Acts, in the preceding year. Though well aware that the abolition of these acts would lead to "Catholic Emancipation," a measure which he dreaded and deprecated as one of the most ruinous projects of modern legislation, yet such was his conscientiousness, such his persuasion of the iniquity of these Acts, that he pleaded for their removal with as much zeal as the keenest partisan in the cause of emancipation could desire. His objection to them was not merely that they involved a gross profanation of sacred things, by prostituting the memorials of the Redeemer's death to obtain secular advantages; but that they made a difference in religion, strictly so called, a ground of exclusion from civil privileges. It was on very different principles that he opposed the admission of Papists to places of power and trust. He "felt not the slightest wish to deprive Roman Catholics of the full liberty, which they already enjoyed, of practising the rites of their worship, and conducting their pri-

vate affairs, without molestation or disturbance;" but he was "decidedly of opinion that the genius and complex system of Popery and the dominant and encroaching spirit of the Church of Rome, not only are contrary to the word of God, and fraught with superstition and idolatry, but are such, in themselves, and in the unequivocal manifestations which have been so often given of their tendencies, as to render it unsafe to intrust the adherents of that superstition with political power in this country; and, in particular, that their divided allegiance—their subjection to a foreign dominion, which has arrogated, exercised, and never renounced a universal authority, affecting, indirectly, at least, the temporal and civil interests of men—their implicit devotion to a Church claiming infallibility and exclusive salvation—and the notorious subserviency which they are under to their spiritual guides, utterly incapacitate them for giving those securities which are requisite to a participation of Legislative and Executive power in a Protestant country, and under a Government like that of Britain."\* In short, he could not regard in the light of persecution for conscience' sake, the policy of withholding civil *power* from a class of men who, under the name of religion, had uniformly employed that power for the suppression or overthrow of civil and religious freedom.

But it was not on political grounds merely that he opposed these concessions to Roman Catholics. He considered Britain as pledged, by solemn covenants to God, for the extirpation of Popery, as a system of idolatry and wickedness; and the proposal to admit the sworn adherents of Rome within the ramparts of the British constitution, he could regard in no other light than as a violation of that solemn compact, exposing us to the judgments of Heaven threatened against those nations which should "give their power and strength unto the beast." He de-

\* Petition to the house of Commons against the Roman Catholic Claims, drawn up by Dr. M'Crie. See Appendix.

nounced it as "throwing away the privileges which we possessed not as principals but as trustees, not as proprietors but usufructuaries." And it was his firm persuasion, founded on the language of Scripture prophecy, and confirmed by all his knowledge of the past history of Popery, as well as by his observation of public opinion and passing events, that the Church of Rome would yet gain a temporary ascendancy in Great Britain, which would issue in a fearful struggle previous to her final overthrow. With such solemn views of the question, we need not be surprised to learn that he frequently took an opportunity of adverting to it from the pulpit. This was amply afforded him at the time by the Book of Ezra on which he was in the course of lecturing. "Convinced from the first," he said on one of these occasions, "that the Ministry of the day will succeed in carrying their object, that their resolution is taken to prosecute their plans, whatever opposition may be made by the country, and that it seems to be the intention of Providence to permit it, from the union of parties hitherto so uniformly opposed, and the lying spirit which has entered into our prophets—my sole object in referring to the measure as I have done, is personal exoneration. We have been told from a high quarter, to avoid such subjects, 'unless we wish to rekindle the flames of Smithfield, now long forgotten. Long forgotten! where forgotten? In heaven? No. In Britain? God forbid. They may be forgotten at St. Stephen's or Westminster Abbey, but they are not forgotten in Britain. And, if ever such a day arrives, the hours of Britain's prosperity have been numbered.'"\* On no subject, indeed, were his feel-

\* "The late Dr. M'Crie, especially, stood out as a beacon to his own degenerate age, of which his sagacious and far-sighted ken enabled him to take the lead. A few of his contemporaries, indeed, of the same mental calibre with himself, as the late Robert Hall, had prophetic glimpses of the approaching struggle between the re-assertors of the faith of Rome, and the descendants of the Reformation. But on Dr. M'Crie, as on a true northern seer, the vision of the future seemed to burst, with all the

ings more apt to be excited. He was deeply grieved by what he considered the grand defection of the Whig party, with whose politics he generally agreed, but who on this question had so completely abandoned the Whiggism of the old school, and joined issue with their opponents, the Tories, who, in former times at least, were favourable to concessions to Roman Catholics.\* This was the only point of public principle on which he differed, and had almost quarrelled, with his friend Dr. Thomson; and many were the conferences which they held on it. That great and good man was, like many others, impressed with the idea that Catholicism had undergone important modifications, and misled by the delusive expectation of healing the dissensions of the country, and triumphing over the errors of Popery, by conceding to Paptists admissibility to places of civil power;—a measure which far from realizing these sanguine prognostics, has been made only a stepping-stone to farther demands—has given increased currency to a superstition, too well adapted to human nature, by removing the stigma which our ancestors had wisely appended to it by placing it under the ban of law—and has engrafted on the British constitution, what was formerly confined to the Protestant and Popish creeds, a principle of perpetual disunion.

Little prospect as he entertained of success in any opposition to this fatal measure, he considered it his duty to use every lawful means to prevent it; and accordingly he joined in a requisition to the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, signed by forty-six respect-

inspirations of literary courage, which laughed to scorn the derision of the puling and degenerate advocates of modern liberalism."—*London Watchman*, Nov. 1835.

\* The Whigs of Scotland were always, till of late years, the foremost in opposing concessions to Popery. The Moderate party in the Church of Scotland, under the management of Principal Robertson, took the opposite side; and his biographer, Mr. Stewart, is at great pains to vindicate him for the part which he took in this question, a part so obnoxious at that time to the people of Scotland, that his life had almost fallen a sacrifice to the popular fury.

able gentlemen, to call a public meeting of those who were of opinion "that no farther political power should be granted to the Roman Catholics of Great Britain and Ireland, nor admission into either House of Parliament," for the purpose of petitioning the Legislature on the subject. His Lordship, however, having previously consulted with the Solicitor-General, was induced, in deference to his opinion, to decline calling such a meeting; and the requisitionists, unwilling to raise any undue excitement, did not press the matter any farther. The Pro-Catholic party, however, without deeming it necessary to ask the sanction of the Provost, or even to apprise him of their design, called a meeting to petition in favour of "Emancipation;" and this meeting, which proved somewhat tumultuous, was held on the 14th March 1829.\* Thus the inhabitants of Edinburgh who were opposed to this measure were deprived of the opportunity enjoyed by their opponents, of publicly expressing their sentiments; but a petition against the claims, which was drawn up by Dr. M'Crie, and signed by 13,150 names, was presented to the House of Commons.

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## CHAPTER VII.

FROM THE PUBLICATION OF THE REFORMATION IN  
SPAIN, TO HIS DEATH.

1829—1835.

FROM the publication of "Spain" in 1829, to the close of 1831, there was a pause in our author's lite-

\* The requisition for this meeting was signed by the Solicitor-General (John Hope, Esq.) who found himself under the necessity of vindicating his conduct in a long letter which he sent to the newspapers, and which I cannot say that I fully understand; but the facts were as stated in the text. The correspondence appeared in a periodical called "The Scottish Protestant," Nos. v. and viii.



rary labours, broken only by a critical article on Sir James Turner's Memoirs in the Edinburgh Review for April 1830.\* We may embrace this opportunity of introducing a few extracts from his correspondence, containing reflections on passing events, or illustrative of his sentiments on various topics of interest. His mind, though naturally cheerful and serene, was liable to be overcast by shades of sombre reflection, which the sunshine of prosperity only brought out into darker and more definite outline. Congratulating a friend, who had built himself a cottage, on his entrance into his new abode, in the end of 1829, he says:—"Our fathers, where are they? This we say of them now, and our children in a little time will breathe the same regret for us, accompanied with a sigh, which, being interpreted, says, 'We shall in a little be where they are!' O earth, earth, earth! thou art the true proprietor and lord paramount of all that is here below. Thou givest forth nothing but what thou receivest again, and thou receivest thine own with usury. Grass, herbs, trees, plants, houses, metals base and precious, and man himself, who hath rifled thee of all these, and who tears thy bosom, and digs into thy bowels, and measuring thy length and thy breadth proudly walks over thee, as if he were more than dust,—all shall return to thee, and find a grave in the womb from which they sprang!"

"I can never," he writes at the same time, "entertain sanguine hopes of those who break off their religious connexions on account of personal dissatisfactions. I am told that Providence sometimes overrules these for opening the eyes of men to the truth—and that is true, but he overrules all the workings of Satan. I am to have an interview with a Baptist to-morrow, who has been hearing me regularly for

\* In this article, which may be published among his miscellaneous pieces, he enters, at some length, into the history of the period occupied by Turner's Memoirs, and canvasses the degree of reliance due to the testimony of that unprincipled soldado.

several months. Is it not a difficult thing to strike the medium between a spirit of proselytizing, and a readiness to instruct—I should have said, a zealous desire to recover the erring, and to win them to the way of truth? One evil of our present divisions on a well-constituted mind is, I should think, their tendency to check and cool the last mentioned feeling. But I must not enter on divisions. That would lead to elegiac strains, which are unfit for the close of a letter.”

In 1830, negotiations for union between the body with which Dr. M'Crie was connected and the Associate Synod of Original Burghers, were resumed and continued for some time, though, unhappily, without success. His correspondence with his brethren about this time is much occupied with earnest pleadings in behalf of this union, and schemes for accomplishing it, which can only be useful now as demonstrating his truly catholic spirit, and intense anxiety to heal the divisions of the Church. As he approached the termination of his course, this amiable spirit became more and more conspicuous; and, though still as jealous as ever of sacrificing truth to peace, it is very apparent that he became more sensible to the injurious effects of division, and the duty and necessity of union among Presbyterians, especially such as were friendly to the cause of the Reformation. “I do not see,” he writes 18th May 1830, “how our melancholy divisions can ever be healed, or even peace be long preserved in any body, unless the principle of allowing for private opinion be acted upon. If all the truths or principles of religion involved in a controversy are asserted, and if the offensive practice [the swearing of Burgess oaths] is put down, and legal security provided against its revival, I really must think that a scriptural ground for union is laid, so far as that controversy is concerned. I would be afraid to insist for more, or to prevent the direct influence of Bible forbearance on such a state of things. In this manner I think the dissension as to the Public Reso-

lutions ought to have been settled before the Restoration; and our fathers were not, or rather the cause they maintained was not, in greater danger from persecution than we and the cause we maintain are in from the torrent of liberalism and an Anti-Reformation spirit. Will our divisions have a less hurtful effect than theirs had? Better sink than throw away the truth; but if we think we have the truth, and that it is in danger of sinking with us, this should be a strong inducement to us to use all lawful means for self-preservation."

The lamented death of Dr. Thomson, on the 9th February 1831, inflicted a severe shock on the feelings of the subject of our memoir. The alarming suddenness of the stroke—their long, and, except on one point, most harmonious co-operation in public life—the frequent contests in which they had fought side by side—and above all, the irreparable loss which the cause of truth sustained in the removal of such an able and dauntless champion, cut down in the mid career of his usefulness, and at a time when his talents were never more required—all contributed to enhance the grief which he felt for him as a private friend. On the Sabbath immediately succeeding his decease, he gave vent to his feelings in an impassioned peroration to his sermon, of which the following is the substance:—"Brethren, pray for us; and let your first and last petition be *humility*. Once, yea twice, has a voice cried to the ministers of this city, and again, since we last met, it hath cried with the sound of a trumpet, 'All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field!' The dispensation to which I refer has produced a deep sensation: O that it may be permanent and salutary! The time has not come at which ceremony permits the dead to be spoken of in public. But I hasten to say the little which I have to say, especially as it is not in the way of eulogy. Others will praise him: as for me—I can only deplore him! And my deploration shall not turn on the splendid talents with

which his Master adorned him—the vigour of his understanding—the grasp of his intellect, or the unrivalled force of his masculine eloquence—but on his honest, firm, unflinching, fearless independence of mind—a quality eminently required in the present time, in which I may say he was single among his fellows, and which claimed for him respect, as well as forbearance, even when it betrayed its possessor into excess.”

Dr. M'Crie, as one of the most intimate friends of the deceased, was requested to draw up a sketch of Dr. Thomson's character for the newspapers; and this, though it has been often printed, shall be given in the Appendix, as a tribute to the memory of one whom he so highly respected and admired. There is one fact in Dr. Thomson's history, brought out in this notice, which cannot be too frequently repeated:—“The fact is, though hitherto known to few, and the time is now come for revealing it, that some of those effusions which were most objectionable, and exposed him to the greatest obloquy, were neither composed by Dr. Thomson, nor seen by him until they were published to the world; and that, in one instance, which has been the cause of the most unsparing abuse, he paid the expenses of a prosecution, and submitted to make a public apology, for an offence of which he was innocent as the child unborn, rather than give up the name of the friend who was morally responsible for the deed,—an example of generous self-devotion which has few parallels.”

It was shortly after this time that he drew up those papers on the “Marrow Controversy,” as it has been called, which appeared in the *Christian Instructor*. To this subject his attention had been invited by his truly excellent friend Dr. Charles Watson, then minister of Burntisland, by whom the task of editing the *Instructor* was undertaken for a short time after Dr. Thomson's death. It may be remarked that this controversy derived its name from a book entitled the “*Marrow of Modern Divinity*,” which was little

more than a compilation of extracts chiefly from Protestant writers of the 16th and 17th centuries on the question of justification, and the distinction between the Law and the Gospel, prosecuted in the form of dialogue. This book, originally composed by an Englishman, named Edward Fisher, was republished in 1718 by Mr. Hogg, minister of Carnock, at the earnest recommendation of Mr. Boston, who had discovered its excellence, and who afterwards added a number of ample notes in explanation and defence of its doctrines. It may be easily supposed, that a treatise which required such a commentary was not free from unguarded expressions; but the consideration that some of the strongest of these expressions were borrowed from the writings of our most eminent reformers, and that the latter part of the treatise was expressly levelled against the antinomian extreme, ought to have protected it from the fate which it experienced. The broad terms in which the author asserted the entire freedom of the believer from the law as a covenant of works, alarmed the jealousy of the moderate party in the Church; and in 1720, the Assembly passed an act condemning the "Marrow," strictly discharging all the ministers of the Church from saying any thing in its favour, by printing, writing, or preaching, and enjoining them to warn their people against reading it. This Act was lamented at the time, by many of the most estimable ministers of the Church, not so much on account of the book in question, as of the precious truths of the Gospel which were involved in the controversy, and on which the Assembly had affixed the odious stigma of Antinomianism. There can be no doubt that the disaffection manifested at this period to the doctrines of grace, as taught at the Reformation, prepared the way for the long reign of that frigid Semi-Arminianism which prevailed during the succeeding portion of the last century. The Seceders keenly took up the cause of the "Marrow," and have always identified its distinguishing principles with the pure

preaching of the Gospel. And there is reason to hope, that as the Church of Scotland becomes more impregnated with sound evangelical doctrine, the prejudices once entertained against these principles will gradually give way.

Such was the character of the controversy to which Dr. M'Crie now turned his attention; and with his wonted zeal, somewhat abated by increasing infirmities, he began a course of reading with the view of exploring the question to its foundation. He was quite sensible of his propensity to push his inquiries into the minute ramifications of a subject which interested him, too far perhaps for popular effect, or farther at least than was required for practical purposes; and such perhaps has been the case with the papers to which we now refer. It was his intention to have written a complete history of the various opinions on the points involved in this controversy, in Scotland, England and America. This design he carried only partially into execution; but he has left in manuscript a continuation of the papers in the *Instructor*, giving an account of the controversy as managed in England.\* It is to be regretted that he did not live to condense the valuable information which these papers contain, and apply the principles which they advocate to the various forms which the controversy has assumed in modern times. Being a stanch advocate of the "Marrow," and deeply convinced that the truths set forth in that publication, how much soever they may have suffered in the estimation of some, from the somewhat paradoxical manner in which they are expressed, lie at the foundation of sound views, and a correct experience of the Gospel system, he was not more offended at the perversion and abuse of these truths, exhibited in the speculations of the Rowites, than he was hurt at the manner in which the crudities of that system, justly

\* These papers, with the continuation, will be published with his *Miscellaneous pieces*.

condemned by the General Assembly, had been by many confounded with the doctrines of the "Marrow" divines. Such, however, was his aversion to mingle in modern contests, and such the delicacy he felt from the position in which he stood to the Church of Scotland, that he shrunk from the task. "So far as I can judge at present," he says Dec. 20, 1831, "I would not be disposed to involve myself with the various mushroom systems, or rather no-systems, which have sprung up so plentifully in our times—I should not even wish to dip into Rowism. I am too partial to the diving-bell, and therefore need to circumscribe the sphere of my inquiries, which I find easier than restraining my curiosity." On the point of delicacy, he was so fastidious as to take every precaution to conceal his authorship of the papers in the *Instructor*, and he felt rather annoyed on its being accidentally discovered.

In reply to Dr. Watson, who expressed a wish that he could be prevailed on to consider what he had written as but the beginning of a more extended view of ecclesiastical affairs in Scotland during the 18th century, he writes, "The field you point out is in many respects very inviting, but in others it presents to my mind what is very repulsive, both in regard to the Established Church and to the Secession. The difficulty of the task would be sufficient to deter me; but over and above this, I would not be reckoned, nor would I judge myself, duly qualified on the head of impartiality, though I had little or nothing to do in the affairs which marked the closing section of the 18th century. We perhaps live still too near to that age, pregnant with important events, for any of us to view its transactions with a thoroughly unbiassed eye. It would, however, be of great use to the future historian to *indicate* and mark the sources of information, to collect scattered materials, and preserve valuable documents which are in danger of daily perishing or being irrecoverably lost. A valued friend and guide

of my youth,\* five-and-twenty years ago, drew up the plan of a society having this for its object. There was at that time too little taste for the subject to make the proposal acceptable, and I doubt there is not great encouragement for now reviving it, notwithstanding the formidable phalanx of devoted friends to the profession of Church History which has arrayed itself within these few weeks."

Again writing to the same valued correspondent, January 9, 1832, he says, "I approve of your idea as to a preliminary chapter, giving an historical sketch of the doctrine of grace from the time of the Reformation, and shall attempt something of that kind, if I go on with the work as proposed. But the task is not without its difficulties. It is very satisfying to find you so far coinciding with any views I have formed of the decline (during the last century,) both in England and in Scotland, from the doctrine of the Reformers, and the general causes which led to it. I have more than once regretted that the state of your health is such as to preclude me from having that oral communication with you which I should have been disposed to improve by talking over certain views that have occurred to my mind; for I deem it a great advantage to be able to submit my thoughts to one on whose judgment I can place confidence, but whose habits of thinking have been, by education and intercourse, formed in a manner somewhat different from my own. It serves both to correct and to confirm. The subject is delicate, and I have reached that period of life at which (if a person is not reckless or very conceited) caution is apt to degenerate into painful diffidence and irresolution.

"It appears to me that the great difference between the ancient Anti-Pelagians and the Reformers, lies in this—that, while both are advocates for grace, the former considered it chiefly in relation to the change which it effects on the *heart*, the latter in relation to

\* Professor Bruce.



the change which it produces on the *state*, as divines express it, of the sinner. In the writings of Augustine, for example, the great champion of grace among the fathers, I have found little about free *justification*; in the writings of Luther again, this is the grand point—“*Articulus stantis ac cadentis ecclesiæ.*” This I look upon as the glory of the Reformation—the great advancement in evangelical light beyond what had been attained by the witnesses of the truth in the Pelagian or in the Antichristian ages. Do not you think there is a similar difference between the doctrine of the Jansenists and of the Reformers? At least, in the works of Pascal, Arnauld and Nicole, I find the grace of God preventing and producing the first good desire, volition and thought in the heart of man; but very little, and nothing very decisive, as to the grace of God in freely justifying the sinner on the sole ground of the atonement and surety-righteousness of Christ.

“I have thought I perceived a change in the tone and phraseology of the reformed divines early in the 17th century. Whether it arose from a feeling of difficulty in defending the strong expressions of the first Reformers against the subtle arguments of Bellarmine and other acute champions of Rome, or whether it may be traced to the working of the spirit which produced Arminianism, I cannot positively determine. But I am chiefly anxious to obtain satisfaction as to the influence which the Arminian controversy exerted on the strain of Calvinistic writing. It has been said, by an authority on which I am far from implicitly relying [Sandeman,] that after that period, ‘in place of free justification by God’s grace through the redemption that is in Christ’s blood, much insisted on by the Reformers—they (the Calvinistic divines and preachers) now began to insist much more in their sermons on free electing grace, but especially on the efficacious power of that grace in the conversion of the elect, calling them effectually, regenerating, &c.—The effect of this strain of

doctrine upon them that hearkened to them was their seeking peace with God and rest to their consciences by what they might feel in themselves, and the exercise of their souls in compliance with the call to faith and repentance.' It is added that 'Gomarus,' the first opponent of Arminius, was an exception to this remark, and 'was chiefly concerned about the ground of acceptance with God.' Now, though I am not prepared to acquiesce in the justice of this charge as laid, yet I am inclined to think that an *engrossing* attention to the points controverted by Van Harmin and his followers was produced (as is ordinarily the case in all controversies;) and that preachers and practical writers became more shy than formerly in using the universal terms employed in Scripture, in proposing the Gospel remedy, and that they were more *hampered* (to use an expressive Scots word) than was necessary, either from the word of God, or their own declared principles concerning particular redemption, in proclaiming the glad tidings of salvation to sinners, and in calling on them to believe in the Saviour. Here it is that I am disposed to think the advantage of the Marrow doctrine lies—while it holds forth a complete salvation (which can be done only on the principle of particular redemption,) it presents a revealed ground—call it an offer, a promise, or a deed of gift or grant (the phrase is immaterial) from God, warranting sinners as such, irrespective of any decree, or any qualifications connected with the decree, to believe in, receive and rest upon Christ for all they need for their recovery and happiness, including deliverance from sin and all its consequences. An offer, provided it is perfectly free, entitles the person to whom it is made, to enter presently on the enjoyment of the thing offered, and yet does not bind the offerer, provided his kindness is rejected, or even neglected. Is not a promise to be considered in the same light, provided it is absolutely free on the part of the promiser, and those to whom it is made have no previous claim upon him? The

promise, however unconditional, if not accepted, does not lay the promiser under obligation to perform, and yet the accepter has the fullest security for the thing promised, and may draw upon the deed or writing. So say civilians; and I am disposed to think that they proceed upon a moral ground.—But I am losing the thread of history, and getting into argument.

“The scheme of the New Methodists, as they were called in France, who about the middle of the 17th century attempted a species of conciliation between Calvinists and Arminians on the heads of election and the extent of the death of Christ, added to the embarrassment which was still more increased by the Antinomianism of the Cromwellian period, to which you justly refer as producing a partial revulsion from evangelical doctrine. This, as well as a passion for accommodating differences, led the excellent Baxter astray. His influence was great on the English Presbyterians. The republication of Dr. Crisp’s works frightened many of the independents at the time of the Revolution. The Dissenters could not fail being affected by the Arminianism of the English Church; and even those of them who disliked it, were afraid of bringing odium on their cause by countenancing any thing which might give the ruling clergy an occasion of accusing them of Antinomianism. There is no writer of whom I am fonder than Henry; but it is impossible not to perceive that Baxterian or Neonomian sentiments or expressions frequently occur in his admirable Commentary. I never look into his continuators.

“Thus, my dear Sir, I have given you, without intending it when I began, an outline of what you wished by way of Preliminary.”

I am tempted to give another extract or two from this valuable correspondence, in illustration of Dr. M’Crie’s views of an important subject—the free offer of the Gospel; and the more so, that, though they were “mere hints thrown out *raptim*,” as he says, they will supply, in some measure, the argu-

mentative part of the treatise which he did not live to complete.

March 15.—“Your remarks on the extracts from Mr. Gib were very gratifying. He was acute, but was sometimes like a man who cuts his own finger by the too fine edge which he has given to his instrument. I never could receive, nor indeed well apprehend, his doctrine about the *two interests*, both of them objects of faith, as taught in the passages extracted,\* and in a recommendatory preface which he wrote to an edition of Dr. Owen on Redemption: nor can I reconcile it with *Marrow* doctrine, of which he was a warm friend, but according to which the believer regards Christ as his, not in possession, but in the free offer of the Gospel.”

April 12.—“I am inclined to think that we are apt to be deceived by the ambiguity of the word *interest* as used in reference to the Gospel salvation, and perhaps the same remark applies to the word *right*. If any benefit is offered to a person, whether the offer be free or conditional, and in whatever manner the person may feel disposed towards it, he has an *interest* in the matter. It concerns or *interests* him. This is not exactly what we mean when we speak of the common interest of Gospel hearers; we mean a *right of claim* (to use the old phrase) to make the benefit our own, by appropriating it in the case of a free gift, or by performing the condition, if it was offered on terms. But besides this, we apply the word *interest* to the actual possession or enjoyment of the benefit; and in this sense the phrase, *an interest in Christ*, or in salvation, has been generally used by divines. Whether this be correct language or not, I shall not say, but humbly think that it has had a tendency to perplex, or at least introduce a confusion of ideas into the subject. Is the Gospel gift or grant free, or is it conditional? If the latter, then we come into possession of the thing gifted or granted

\* Gib's Display, vol. ii., p. 169—174.

on the performance of the condition, whatever that may be; and a consciousness of that performance is necessary to any assurance of our obtaining the benefit, or having a claim to it. If the former, then we come into possession by appropriating it, or by a believing reception of it as ours by the free gift of the donor. And in this case there is an assurance of the benefit, just as the beggar in taking the alms offered him is assured they are his (not because they are possessed,) and that he shall have all the benefit of them; and just as the person who presents a promissory-note, granted by a good hand, is persuaded or assured that he shall obtain a sum specified in it; only, in the case under our consideration, the taking or the presenting, and the persuasion or assurance, are not two things, but identical; this being the peculiarity of the Gospel, that faith (not any other act, mental or corporeal) is the instituted means of putting the sinner legally (so to speak) in possession of the good exhibited and conveyed by the testimony, —God sustaining it in this way according to his plan of mercy, and gracious declarations. “He that believeth shall be saved.” “To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” “According to thy faith, so be it unto thee,” &c.

“In the Gospel, there are not only general propositions or declarations, ascertaining the perfection of Christ’s work,—that he died for sins, procured their remission, and did all that was necessary to satisfy divine justice and to render it a righteous thing for God to receive the rebel back to his favour; but this is so revealed as to afford the amplest ground and warrant to all to take the benefit of it. This constitutes the message glad tidings. “Unto you is born a Saviour—To you is the word of this salvation sent—Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.” That which gives to the doctrine concerning Christ, his ability, the perfection of his atonement, &c, this bearing and application—

call it offer, grant, or promise—makes it gospel to me. It may be expressed, as it often is, explicitly in Scripture, but it is implied even in the most general enunciation of its doctrines; and it is understood and taken for granted even by those who think they confine themselves to the general truth, provided they derive any relief or benefit from it; just as the inhabitants of a district, ready to perish of famine, would be relieved by hearing that a king's ship had arrived in a neighbouring port laden with corn—the proclamation, by royal authority, of the *fact*, would give them joy, though unaccompanied at first by any particular notification, and they would supply the words, "Come—buy and eat, yea, without money and without price." They would supply such words, not by their wishes merely, but by comparing their condition with the character of the prince as ascertained by the fact combined with the proclamation. Still, however, the explicit statements of the warrant would be of the greatest importance, and in this respect God "has not left himself without witness."

"But what signifies an offer or grant that conveys nothing?" It signifies a great deal to him that is convinced he has nothing—it is *all* to him who is ready to receive.—"But how can I believe that to be mine, which *is not* mine, and *may never be* mine?" If a friend were to tell down a sum of money for you on the table, or authorize you to draw upon him for it, or inform you that he had set aside for you a certain property, could you not believe it was yours? Yet you may never enjoy it; you may disbelieve him, you may spurn, despise, or neglect his gift, and he may appropriate it to himself, or bestow it on another.—"But if God, as you say, has given his Son, and eternal life in him, to the hearers of the Gospel, by a free and unconditional grant, how can he be true and faithful if any of them come short of it?" Reflect on the case of yourself and friend above supposed, and give the answer. A man is not bound to

pay his debts, *creditore nolente et repugnante*, much less is he bound to make his gifts available on a corresponding supposition. You do not expect to receive money for a bill which you hold unless you write your name on the back. Shall our unbelief mar the faithfulness of a good and promising God? I might have referred to the doctrine laid down in the Roman Digests, as commented on by civilians, as to the difference between *pactum* and *pollicitatio*, which are described thus, *Pactum est duorum consensus atque conventio: pollicitatio vero, offerentis solius promissum*. The amount of the doctrine is, a simple promise is not binding unless accepted.

“Forgive me, my dear Sir, for running on in this strain, and writing as if I were dictating, or laying down self-evident axioms. Mind I am contending with or rather seeking to escape from my *meagrim*,\* and you will not wonder that I treat my subject in a similar way.—What dry stuff would our letters be to our keen-set politicians, who are at present gaping for news about the Reform Bill! Marrow of Modern Divinity! A dry bill of fare indeed!—Yet much depends on the fate of this all-engrossing Bill.”

From these extracts it will be seen how much his mind was occupied with this subject; and it is interesting to observe, that as he approached the termination of his life and literary career, his studies were directed to topics more immediately relating to “the common salvation.” “I have been revising,” he says to another correspondent, in January 1832, “my doctrinal reading (rather historico-polemical reading,) and taking a few notes; but I am now frightened at the shadow of what I used once to take a pleasure in tossing up and down. I have carved out too large work for my leisure and strength. Besides, I have lost any turn or taste I ever had for polemics, and would much rather become a conciliator, and, like

\* He had at this time a severe attack of something like *tic doloureux*.

Witsius, write an *Irenicum*. However, I have at least, by what I have done, got a treat in the writings of Hervey. Have you read his letters, or his three sermons entitled, "The Time of Danger, the Means of Safety?" The former exhibit a most charming combination of love of learning, and deep evangelical piety; and the latter, especially the two first, are the best sermons I have read."

But with all this growing aversion to polemical and party strifes, he could not avoid taking some interest in the important public questions which now began to agitate the religious world. In the Voluntary controversy, which may be said to have commenced with the year 1832, he never took any active or prominent part. On the grand *principles* involved in this question, so far as these related to the duty of nations and their rulers to recognise, countenance and support the true religion, he entertained to the last the opinions for which he had contended and suffered in early life, in defence of which he had written, and to the assertion of which he was pledged by his public profession. To have lived to see the importance of these principles recognised by such a large portion of the community—the faithful appearance which he and his brethren had made for them, at a time when they were considered as contending for trifles, at length publicly appreciated and applauded—and his "Statement" of the old controversy, which had lain for so many years in obscurity, eagerly sought after, republished, and quoted on all occasions as one of the most able defences of the principle of Establishments—must have yielded him no small gratification. At the same time, the purely fiscal and political aspect which the controversy assumed—the bitterness and personal animosity with which it was conducted—and, above all, the position which he held as a Seceder, conscientiously opposed to the existing establishments on the ground of corruptions adhering to their constitution as well as administration,—induced him to keep aloof from



the debate. The sentiments which he held, both on the Voluntary question, and that of return to the communion of the Established Church, are expressed in an address by the Synod of original Seceders, entitled, "Vindication of the Principles of the Church of Scotland, in relation to questions presently agitated," published in 1834, which passed through his hands before it was submitted to the Synod or the public. As we have already remarked, Dr. M'Crie's sentiments on this question went much deeper than merely approving of a civil establishment of religion, in the ordinary sense of that expression. The grand principle for which he contended was, that it is the right and duty (two things which he viewed as identical) of a nation in its collective capacity, as well as of a man in his individual capacity, to decide on the true religion, and having decided, to recognise and countenance the profession of it. He was persuaded that the Voluntary principle was not only untenable, but was incapable of defence, except on grounds inconsistent with a belief in divine revelation, and indirectly but infallibly leading to infidelity. The civil ratification of a peculiar form of religion, he looked upon merely as a corollary from the principle we have stated; and as to the endowment of the church, this he regarded merely as a subsidiary arrangement, highly desirable where it could be obtained, but the expediency of which, in all circumstances of a church or state, he was not disposed to maintain.

This was not a mere theory, or abstract principle, with Dr. M'Crie. In a letter to a brother, who was anxious to vindicate the Reformation cause, without committing himself on the subject of establishments, he says, "I can only say that I am fully satisfied, not only of the lawfulness of establishments *in the abstract*, but also of that which was adopted by our reforming ancestors. I consider it as entering essentially into the Reformation for which Seceders have always contended, and I am persuaded that any defence of it which excludes this, must not only be de-

fective, but must be inconclusive and unsatisfactory to all intelligent persons of whatever sentiments. I despair of seeing any satisfactory defence of the permanent obligation of our Covenants that does not proceed on this principle." He condemned the abuses which clung to our establishments, not the principle of an establishment; and in condemning these abuses, he could point to a definite model, which once existed in great splendour. He could not, however, wholly approve even of the constitution of the present establishment. The following extract from the document we have mentioned, may explain the position in which he stood in regard to it:—  
"Our objections to the established Church of Scotland are not confined to her administration: we cannot unreservedly approve of her constitution as it was established at the Revolution. Though our fathers were in communion with that Church, yet they, together with many faithful men who died before the Secession, and some who continued in the Establishment after that event, were all along dissatisfied with several things in the settlement of religion at the Revolution, and in the ratification of it at the union between Scotland and England. The first Seceders, in their Judicial Testimony and Declaration of Principles, specified several important points with respect to which that settlement involved a sinful departure from a previous settlement of religion in Scotland (that, namely, between 1638 and 1650,) which they distinctly held forth as exhibiting the model, in point of Scriptural purity and order, of that reformed constitution to which they sought by their contendings to bring back the church of their native land. This Synod occupy the same ground with the first Seceders. They are aware that the Established Church of Scotland has it not in her power to correct all the evils of the Revolution settlement which they feel themselves bound to point out; but they cannot warrantably quit their position of secession, until the Established Church show a dispo-

sition to return to that reformed constitution, by using means to correct what is inconsistent with it, so far as is competent to her, in the use of those powers which belong to her as an ecclesiastical and independent society under Christ her Head, and by due application to the State for having those laws rescinded or altered which affect her purity and abridge her freedom. It will be found, on a careful and candid examination, that a great part of the evils, in point of administration, which are chargeable on the Church of Scotland, may be traced directly or indirectly, to the defects and errors cleaving to her establishment at the revolution; and as it is her duty, so it will be her safety seriously to consider these, and, following the direction of Scripture and the example of our reforming ancestors, to confess them before God and seek their removal.”\*

Entertaining such sentiments, and considering the growing prejudice against establishments, on the one hand, and the little prospect of the removal of their abuses, on the other, he was disposed to be very apprehensive of their fate, and to despair of their being defended with success,—an anticipation which, though considerably relieved from its gloom by subsequent events, was never wholly removed from his mind. In this mood he seems to have been, when he says, Oct. 3, 1832, “Much as I disapprove of the present movement on the part of the Dissenters, yet I am afraid that the Scotch, as well as the sister, establishment must come down, before things can go right.” Yet, shortly after, I find him rallying his correspondent in a livelier strain:—“Is it yet time for me to commence a canvass for John Knox’s church? I have heard that Adam Gib, to a considerably late period of his life, expressed the hope

\* Vindication of the Principles of the Church of Scotland, &c., p. 19. The defects referred to were chiefly the want of a formal recognition of the obligation of our National Covenants, of the Divine right of Presbytery, and of the Independence of the Church.

that he would preach in St. Giles's. You know the practical inference. Yet we do injury to more than our own happiness by dealing harshly with kind hope, repressing her ardour, and chiding her for those lamb-like friskings in which she indulges to please us."

In April 1832, he appeared in a public meeting called for the purpose of petitioning Parliament against the Government plan of education for Ireland.\* Though on this occasion deserted and opposed

\* This meeting was advertised to take place on Thursday, May 10, and the attendance of those persons only was requested "who consider that the plan of Education for Ireland is objectionable, as having a tendency to withdraw the Bible practically from the instruction to be afforded under the sanction of that plan." After the meeting had convened, however, it was found, that the Dean of Guild refused the use of the church to either of the parties in the question. This was intimated by the chairman, who announced that the meeting would be adjourned to the succeeding day; and he took the opportunity of adverting to certain marks of disapprobation or derision which were uttered by some who had come to disturb the meeting. After this intimation had been made, "Dr. M'Crie," says the newspapers of the day, "evidently labouring under a considerable degree of excitement, stepped forward, and said he would only add a single word. 'Those gentlemen would recollect that they had to do with men,—and with men who were not accustomed to be brow beat. If they were not then permitted to be heard, they would bow their heads, and wait till they had an opportunity. A meeting would be held to-morrow; it would be an open meeting, as open as it was possible to be in any house in this extended and unwall'd city. They had no design to conceal any resolution they had to propose; every gentleman and mechanic, down to the lowest grade, might enter and hear, if he conducted himself as a man. Ho (Dr. M'Crie) held a public meeting every Lord's day, and there was not an individual prevented from entering within the walls of the house. It was true there was what was called a plate at the door, but any person might pass it with his hands in his pockets—ay, though his pockets were sealed;—all that was required of him was to sit quiet, and he might go and give as his opinions to the organs of the press what he thought fit, however opposed these might be to the secret sentiments of his own breast. He thought it unnecessary to say more; he had such confidence in the good sense of his fellow-citizens, that he did not believe they would meet with any indecent interruption.'" The Doctor's "excitement" on this occasion, arose no doubt from finding himself in a minority, as he afterwards expressed it, and opposed by that very class of persons whom he could not regard in any other light than as deserters from the ranks of constitutional

by many of those with whose political views he generally coincided, he warmly supported the petition, on the high ground of Christian principle, and the real interests of education. Here also, as in the case of the Roman Catholic claims, his leading principle came to his aid,—that “Society is a corporate body, and has rights and duties of the same kind as those of the individual.” Granting this, his line of argument was clear. Extracts from the Bible for the purpose of affording a cheap book for schools might pass; but when the extracts were made avowedly with the view to conciliate the prejudices of a class of persons who deny the right of the laity to the use of the whole Bible, the measure assumed quite another complexion. An important principle was conceded, so important as to involve the very foundation of Protestantism. And were this view of the question fairly taken, we do not see that, among true Protestants, there could be two opinions entertained regarding it.

The following note refers to the same question:—

“SALISBURY PLACE, *May 24, 1832.*”

MY DEAR SIR,—Engagements have prevented me from replying to your kind letter, and they must go far to plead my apology for not complying with the request it conveyed. I do not use complimentary language, when I say that there is no man whose advice I would more readily listen to on that point than yours, honouring as I do the zeal and promptitude with which you have come forward in support of the cause of the Reformation on more than one trying occasion. I shall not say that I will do nothing; but at any rate I should like to see the speech of the Chairman at the antagonist meeting, which is

Whiggism; as much as from indignation at the unbecoming interruption of some of them, who had placed themselves conspicuously before him, as if to outface the gentlemen on the platform, or enjoy their temporary disappointment. A full report of his speech, delivered next day, will be found in the Appendix.

promised, and also what the General Assembly will do. I understand the Assembly are to have the question before them on Friday, and trust they will be faithful and firm, as well as moderate and wise, in their decision. The question, "Who are, or who shall be, the ministry?" important as it may be, is inferior to the question, "What shall henceforth be the religion of this country? and shall our children serve Christ or Antichrist?" But the very terms of this question involve treason against the goddess of the present generation—Charity, which all are now summoned to fall down and worship. It has been my opinion, fixedly, for some time, that any administration to be formed at present, Whig or Tory, would sacrifice religion on the shrine of political expediency; and "my people," provided their temporary and worldly views were gratified, would "love to have it so." This is my political creed.—Yours very truly,

“THO. M'CRIE.

“To George Ross, Esq., Woodburn.”

On the same principle, though guided by other and still holier considerations, he took an active part in supporting the Society for promoting the due observance of the Lord's day, at a meeting of which, held in December 1832, he spoke at some length, dwelling on the advantages, moral and social, as well as religious, which would result from protecting that blessed day from profanation, and securing to the labouring classes in particular, the free enjoyment of its sacred rest.

His mind was now strongly drawn to another subject of very great public interest, the question of Church Patronage. In the beginning of 1833, he attended a meeting of the Anti-Patronage Society, at which his friend Sir George Sinclair presided, and delivered a speech in which he warmly advocated the abolition of patronage, as the only means of saving the Establishment and promoting its efficiency. "It becomes," said he, "the duty and interest of an Es-

established Church to present as extensive a surface of attraction as possible, and carefully to remove every thing that contributes to lessen its influence. A few individuals who are attached to its radical principles, and who cherish the hope that the abuses which drove them from its communion will be reformed, may continue for a considerable time to move in the circle which they at first described, and to stand in the same relation to her in which they placed themselves at the separation. But the principles of human nature and experience warrant the conclusion, that by far the greater part will gradually recede, until they reach the point of direct opposition. It is just a hundred years since a secession from the Established Church of Scotland took place, caused by the enforcement of the law of patronage. The first Seceders were friendly, not only to the standards of the Church of Scotland, but to her establishment by law. This they avowed to the world, and they confirmed it in the most solemn manner, for they were honest and sincere in the avowal. They continued for a considerable time to adhere to these principles; but at last they wearied of holding them, and now the leading persons among them have entered into a league (I cannot call it a solemn league) with Independents and other sects, in an open and avowed attempt to overthrow all Ecclesiastical Establishments. Far am I from justifying them in this step; but neither can I apply the flattering unction, and say that all the fault is with the one party, and that the other is guiltless. The proportion of blame I do not meddle with; that must be left to a higher and impartial hand. *Verbum sat sapientibus.* ‘I speak to wise men; judge ye what I say.’—“Sir,” he concluded, “if you succeed in your object, you will do me much harm—you will thin, much thin my congregation. For I must say, (and the attention with which you have listened to me demands the frank avowal,) that though patronage were abolished to-morrow, I could not forthwith enter into the Es-

tablishment. But I am not so blind, or so ignorant of the dispositions of the people, as to suppose that they would act in that manner. Your cause will soon come into honour; the restoration of long-lost rights will convert popular apathy into popular favour; and in their enthusiasm the people will forget that there are such things as erroneous teachers and neglect of discipline. Do I therefore dread your success, or stand aloof from you on the ground mentioned? Assuredly not. The truth is, that I think I may be of more service to you by declining to be in your council. I have only to say, therefore, Go on and prosper; though your beginnings have been but small, may your latter end greatly increase! You have my best wishes and prayers."

In the month of May of the same year, he published an anonymous pamphlet, entitled, "What ought the General Assembly to do at the Present Crisis?" This may be said to have been his last publication. The object of this tract was to impress on the members of the Assembly for that year, before whom the question was to be brought in the form of overtures from various presbyteries and synods of the Church, the importance and necessity of taking a decisive step in the matter, instead of resting in any half measure, which would neither satisfy the country, nor save the Establishment. The question in the title was thus briefly and emphatically answered, "WITHOUT DELAY, PETITION THE LEGISLATURE FOR THE ABOLITION OF PATRONAGE." His reasons for concealing his name were, I have reason to think, partly his extreme delicacy in appearing to take any share in a controversy which more immediately concerned the Established Church; and partly that he might deliver his sentiments freely without appearing to dictate. For this purpose, the present writer being required to come under a promise of secrecy, was cooped up, with instructions, not to transcribe, but to transmute the manuscript by turning it into his own style,—a task which he found so difficult, and executed with



so little good-will, that he was not surprised to find that this, like the author's similar attempts at concealment, proved ineffectual, and that the paternity of the piece was soon discovered beyond the need of farther mystification. The pamphlet contains his matured thoughts on the subject which had long occupied his attention, and on which his reading was very extensive. The arguments from Scripture and history are not overlooked; but though on these points his own mind was fully made up, he considered it necessary, for the sake of others, to dwell at greater length on the argument from expediency. Accordingly, he begins with exposing the erroneous notions which prevail "about what constitutes a crisis in the affairs of an individual or society." "The man of business never thinks that his affairs have come to a crisis till he has paid his last shilling, or till he is so dunned by his creditors that he can no longer evade their demands, and is forced to declare himself bankrupt. Rulers never dream of a crisis in a nation's affairs, so long as the wheels of government, how much soever injured and embarrassed, can be kept in motion, and they go on protecting abuses and disregarding complaints, till matters have arrived at such a state, that no alternative is left between provoking open resistance, and granting all that an impatient people, galled by suffering and delay, are pleased to demand. This is to confound the crisis and the catastrophe; or, at least, to bring them as near to each other as the flash of the lightning and the crash of the thunder."—"There is a time when the requests of a community may be granted with safety, with honour, and with advantage, but beyond which the boon is received with cold indifference, and improved as an argument for increasing demands. Here is the crisis in a nation's affairs, and it is the part of true wisdom to discern it." Such a crisis he considered that time to be in ecclesiastical affairs; and he takes occasion to argue the absurdity of continuing the antiquated yoke of patronage, in connexion with the recently

acquired political franchise. "A nation labouring under political and ecclesiastical bondage has been fitly compared to 'an ass crouching down between two burdens.' But a nation released from political, and retained under ecclesiastical thralldom, would exhibit the ridiculous figure of an ass with one of his panniers cut off, while the other dangled at his side, causing the patient animal to stagger at every pace, and threatening ever and anon to land him in the ditch."

In the beginning of the following year, he was summoned, with several others, to give his evidence before a Committee of the House of Commons on Church Patronage. "I am very unfond of the errand," he says, March 17, 1834. "I do not see any good to be expected from the Committee, constituted as it is, and in the present state of the minds either of the Legislators or of those for whom it is proposed they should legislate. And I do not consider myself a proper person to give evidence on the subject,—on more than one ground which will readily occur to you. Accordingly, I have endeavoured to get myself excused, but unsuccessfully as yet, and suppose I shall be forced to go, unless a doctor's certificate save me.—One of the topics, it seems, on which I am expected to give evidence, is the *working* of Patronage. Now, waiving the delicacy of my speaking of its present effects, or even of those within my time of recollection, I really do not know what I could say on that subject. Like many others, within, I suppose, as well as without the Establishment, I looked upon Patronage as an iron saddle which had grown into the Church's back, and from which there was no hope of her being relieved; and, as neither I nor my immediate connexions felt it, I did not trouble myself with inquiries or observations about its operation.—I have no doubt, the evidence before the Committee will be unfavourable to popular election. If Patronage were abolished, what do you think the best substitute? and if the right were

given to the congregation, what checks would you propose, to prevent canvassing, precipitation, &c.?"

"It delights me," he writes to Dr. Watson, March 29, "to find your ideas coincide so exactly with my own, especially on a subject about which such various sentiments prevail even among good and well-intentioned men. This confirms and comforts me under the grievous and grieving consideration, that at a time when deliverance from the yoke of patronage was, for the first time since its imposition, an object of reasonable and confident hope, that hope should be dashed by division and distraction of views among those who have the interests of vital religion at heart. This may be viewed as the natural effect of the long-continued yoke of politico-ecclesiastical tyranny, which breaks the spirit, narrows the intellect, and inures to a base servitude; but I cannot help looking upon it in a still more serious light, as a judicial infatuation, and an evidence that Providence, for our sins, intends to defeat the sanguine hopes which we were cherishing of better times. The schemes of some wise men in our day resemble very much the plans of those in the days of Ezekiel, who 'daubed the wall with untempered mortar.' Can the blessing of God be expected on any measure which retains, and is calculated to perpetuate, that which has been the source of so much wo to the Church of Scotland, and caused the ruin of so many precious souls? To expect that the power of that party which has so long lorded it over the Church will be broken, or that their opponents will ever recover a proper tone, or commanding influence, unless that which raised the former and sunk the latter is destroyed and removed out of the way, is visionary, and as absurd as it would be to expect (*componere parva magnis*) that a sinner could be rescued from the bondage of corruption while he lies under the sentence of the law. 'The strength of sin is the law,' may be safely applied to both. But I shall get as warm as

you, if I go on.”—“Supposing patronage abolished, what would you think of the vacant congregation being obliged (by ecclesiastical law) to name a committee of their number to look out for proper persons, preachers, &c., to be heard, through the presbytery, to consist of the elders and a certain number chosen by the congregation? Would this prevent over-haste? Or would it be a species of patronage and a nucleus for canvassing?”

Having reached London in the end of April 1834, Dr. M'Cric underwent an examination before the Committee on Church Patronage, on the 2d of May, when, says he, “I had a sederunt of nearly four hours.” He met with little or no interruption, and was treated by all the members of committee “with great politeness and courtesy.” The only part of his evidence which was demurred to, was an extract from a letter of Wodrow's, in 1717, respecting the political character then imparted to the proceedings of the General Assembly. “I said I hoped to be allowed to read it as my own sentiments, and after a short delay was permitted to proceed. It was a considerably long, stiff, stinging diatribe, written in a style superior to Wodrow's ordinary, and under the impulse of the maxim, *facit indignatio versus*. I looked on it as one of the most important pieces of my evidence, and having got that testimony safely lodged, I laid aside all fear.”\* On the 7th of May he was again called in and examined. “Have no doubt,” he says, “the committee are heartily tired. They bore my rude plainness with wonderful forbearance.” “The committee requested me to examine a copy of the Book of the Universal Kirk, which was surreptitiously obtained by the Episcopal clergy, and is still forcibly

\* To Dr. Watson, 3d May 1834. The extract referred to is that ending with the striking words, “Restricting of patrons, if the people be forefaulted of their just right, or obliging them to take the consent of Presbyteries before they present a minister already fixed to a congregation, will but line the yoke, and make it sit closer to our necks, and perpetuate it upon us and posterity.”

detained in Sion College. With great difficulty it was produced by the London clergy.\* I dine to-day with the Bishop of ——. How shall I ‘My Lord’ him?”

After his return in May 1834, he writes, “The result of the Assembly’s proceedings did not surprise me any more than that of the committee’s. The patronage vote, however, did disappoint me, as I was led to believe that a greater minority would appear. However, all is under wise management. “Should it be according to thy mind?” “He is wise”—our wisdom, at the best, is folly, and we see one another’s freaks and faults, and laugh or fume at them, while One above sees ours, and *bears* with them. You may have heard that I gave offence on the Sabbath before the close of the Assembly; yet I thought I was moderate. The text was Daniel xii. 8: “O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?””

The reference here is to the sermon in the printed volume, entitled, “The Aspect of the ‘Times,” in which he speaks, with such decided disapprobation, of the Veto Act. “I say it is more than suspicious, that the alleged boon should be presented by the hands of those who have summarily and haughtily thrown out the petitions of the Christian people against patronage. They say, they have muzzled the monster: it is a mistake; they have only muffled him, and they have muzzled the people.” During the sitting of the General Assembly, many of the ministers resorted to his church; and this was not the only occasion, when they found him, as he expressed it, “more plain than pleasant.” On such occasions, the freedom with which he condemned the policy of the Kirk, when it happened to displease him, would sometimes give offence—though only to

\* This valuable document, which the Governors of Sion College would never give up to the Church of Scotland to which it properly belonged, alleging they were bound by the deed of gift (of the thief) from parting with the custody of it, was destroyed in the late fire which consumed the Parliament House.

those who were unacquainted with his character, or unable to enter into the conscientious motives and principles by which he was actuated. It was certainly from no censorious bigotry of spirit—from no “sour leaven of sectarian jealousy,” that he employed such strong language; it arose from his instinctive dislike of all carnal and temporizing policy, and from the very intensity of his concern for the National Church, wound up to excitement by anticipating the consequences which might result from a single false step at such a critical period of her history. The fact is, that he said far more *severe things* against the Church than ever he said against the Voluntaries; on the same principle, that a father will speak more sharply at times to his own children, whom he loves, than to a stranger, whom he would not willingly admit into his family.

Nothing was more apt to incense him, than any mode of arguing in behalf of establishments which reflected on the Secession, by insinuating that Seceders could not consistently plead for them, while they remained in a state of separation from the Established Church. He was equally displeased with some injudicious advocates for endowments, who boasted of them as if they were essential to secure ministerial independence. In the course of lecturing through the Gospel by Luke, when he came to these words, “When I sent you without purse, or scrip, or shoes, lacked ye any thing? and they said, Nothing:” he took occasion to rebuke those who taunted their unendowed brethren with their dependence on the people, “even though they may have been provoked by persons who have extravagantly lauded the principle of voluntary contribution.” “There can be no doubt,” he said, “that the apostles of Jesus Christ were supported in this way; and our friends of the Establishment should be less apt to taunt those who are thus maintained, lest they themselves should also (ay, and that sooner, perhaps, than they are aware,) be reduced to the same necessity.”

He held, of course, what no enlightened defender of Establishments has denied, that voluntary contribution was the primitive mode of supporting the ministry, and, therefore, *a* Scriptural, though by no means *the* only Scriptural mode; for in perfect consistency with this, he maintained that it was the duty of Christian nations to make a permanent provision for the support of the ordinances of religion. Some persons, however, incapable of perceiving the important difference involved in this use of the definite and indefinite article, and taking advantage of the strong terms in which he would sometimes speak of the probable fate of our existing Establishments, were fain to quote his authority as favouring the cause of Voluntaryism. On one occasion only he considered it necessary to contradict a report of this nature, which had been carried, I believe, to Newcastle; and in a letter which was inserted in some of the newspapers of the day, he declared that whatever might be his fears regarding Establishments, he was certain of one thing—that if the Dissenters should succeed in overturning them, they would only share in the triumph with infidels, papists and all sorts of irreligious persons.

It would be highly unbecoming in me to decide how far his views regarding the position and prospects of the Church of Scotland might have been modified had he lived to witness her present struggles. But there are some points on which we can be at no loss to ascertain his sentiments. That he would have cordially approved of the efforts which she is now making to assert her independence, against the encroachments of the civil courts, cannot for a moment be questioned, by any who reflect on the decided tone in which he has vindicated her former contendings for the same object, in the days of Melville, when the Church stood upon much more delicate ground, and before she could plead the sanction of those constitutional laws by which she was protected in her contest with royal authority in the time

of Henderson. The independence of the Church having since then been repeatedly secured by the statute law of the land, he considered it her legal right, as it was her bounden duty, to assert her privileges as a Church of Christ, and condemned the conduct of former Assemblies for having practically relinquished them.\* But patronage he held to be "glaringly inconsistent with the Presbyterian constitution, and with that independence of all foreign jurisdiction, or extrinsic control to which it lays claim;"† a sentiment which, beyond all reasonable doubt, was, till within these few years, entertained and professed by the Church of Scotland in every period of her history. He agreed with the compilers of the Second Book of Discipline, that "the liberty of election of persons called to the ecclesiastical function, cannot stand with patronages and presentations to benefices;" and held, with the General Assembly of 1712, that the Act of Queen Anne restoring patronages was "contrary to our Church constitution solemnly ratified by the Acts of Parliament of both kingdoms." Convinced therefore that the law of patronage, whenever the patrons chose to prosecute their claims, could easily be so interpreted or so enforced as to nullify the Church's independence, though this also was secured by law, he despaired of the success of any measure which proposed to reconcile the two conflicting principles, or render them compatible in their operation, and augured no good from the attempt which was made to effect this object by the Veto Act of 1834. In other words, he was thoroughly persuaded that no expedient which the Church could devise, or the State could sanction, short of the abolition of patronage, would secure the Church in the undisturbed enjoyment of her independence. Besides objecting to the Veto on the ground of its merely yielding a right of rejection, instead of a right of election, to the Christian people, and of its

\* Testimony of Original Seceders, p. 38.

† Ibid. p. 42.



being "a half-measure, lying open to objections on both hands, and which could not be supposed to give any thing like general satisfaction," he entertained serious doubts of its legality, and frequently declared his firm conviction that it would lead to collision, contention, and litigation. "It is an indirect way," he said before the Committee on Church Patronage, "of crippling the power and abridging the rights of patrons, which though followed for some time after the Act of Queen Anne, was ultimately abandoned. It appears to me more than questionable whether the restriction it imposes be legal, and whether patrons may not resist its exercise. A qualified minister was a thing recognised by the canon law, and a condition from the time that the right of presentation was conferred; but no such element as the consent of the people, whether avowed or tacit, was then known; it was revived indeed by the Reformed Church, but she could never prevail on the State to recognise it; and one principal reason why the government would not ratify the Second Book of Discipline was, because the Assembly would not agree to insert after the consent of the congregation," the words, "if the people have a lawful cause against his life and doctrine." At the least, the motion is an attempt to apply abstract Presbytery (to use a phrase in a former question) in order to neutralize concrete patronage. It is not, in my opinion, to the honour of the legislature, that the laws of the country should be thus indirectly set aside, instead of their being regularly rescinded by the proper authority."

This judgment has been since confirmed by the decision of the highest legal authorities in the realm; and it is vain now to dispute it. The reader may be struck with the similarity of the opinion here expressed to that of the late opponents of the Veto. This did not escape himself: "Dr. Cook and I," he writes to one of his family, "travelled together in a coach lately; and we both cordially agreed in condemning the Veto. Extremes meet." They met,

indeed, in their judgment on that particular measure, but in the path which they took to reach it, and in the reasons which they had for opposing it, they were still at extremes. Nor can we suppose that Dr. M'Crie's judgment in this case, was formed in the spirit of those who accuse the Church of rebellion, because she has not, in her ecclesiastical capacity, surrendered into the hands of the civil courts her spiritual independence. He condemned the Veto, principally because he was persuaded that it tended, if it was not designed, to perpetuate the reign of patronage—more especially because it amounted to a virtual recognition by the Church of that pernicious system, which she had always declared to be a usurpation and a yoke—and because it proceeded on what he viewed as a delusion, namely, that though patronage continued to be the law of the land, the Church had it in her own power, so to modify the grievance as to render it comparatively harmless. Regarding lay-patronage, as in its very nature incompatible with the spiritual independence of the Church, he could not agree with the supporters of the Veto, that the Church of Scotland had objected simply to an absolute or unrestricted patronage; for, at the very time when she was carrying into effect those practical restrictions which she put upon the rights of patrons, she was earnestly petitioning for the abolition of the law itself. In this point of view, he considered that all practical modifications of the law, attempted by the Church, might be found illegal, that is, incompatible with the rights of patrons; just as he would have viewed the rights of patrons, had they been prosecuted to such an extent as they now are, to be incompatible with the rights of the Church. But then, in her former days, the Church had plainly told the Government that she held the law of patronage to be a direct infringement of her constitution, as established at the Revolution, and solemnly confirmed at the Union; that she did not, and could not, as a Church, recognise the rights of patrons, as they

were at direct variance with her constitution; and that, therefore, if the State was still willing to support the constitution of the Church, it must be on the distinct understanding, that she could not sacrifice her spiritual rights as invaded by that law. At her own peril, the Church continued to settle ministers on the suit and calling of congregations, as if patronage did not exist; but knowing that, so long as that law stood, her liberties would be constantly endangered, under an adverse administration, by patrons being empowered to drag her before courts of law for acting according to her constitution,—she petitioned that the law might be “regularly rescinded by the proper authority.”

The following letters, however, will explain his views on the deeply interesting questions of Patronage and the Independence of the Church, much more satisfactorily than any detached passages which might be quoted from his writings. It is only necessary to premise, that they were addressed to Mr. Colquhoun, member of Parliament, in answer to questions put to him by that gentleman, with the view of obtaining information on the subject of patronage previous to its being submitted to the notice of Parliament.

“To J. C. Colquhoun, Esq.

“EDINBURGH, *Feb.* 18, 1833.

“DEAR SIR,—You will think I am laying claim to a share of the prophetic spirit ascribed to John Knox, when I say, that I had answered your letter twenty-four hours before its arrival. Mr. — had transmitted to me the queries you addressed to him, and I gave him a few jottings by way of answer, the substance or material points of which he may have by this time communicated to you. But as your letter to me starts some new difficulties on the subject, I write you what occurs to me, at the hazard of partial repetitions. It will at least show that I am not unwilling, at your request, to convey any information in my power.

“In the first place, it is of importance to distinguish between the law of the land, and the principles (I may say the law) of the Church of Scotland, respecting patronage. As to the former, you are quite correct in your statement, that patronage has existed since the Reformation, always excepting, however, the periods between 1649 and 1660, and between 1690 and 1712. On the other hand, I think it equally clear and incontestable, that patronage was contrary to the avowed principles of the Church of Scotland, from the commencement of her reformed existence, that she has pronounced it a grievance and an abuse, submitted to its exercise from pure necessity, and down to 1784 petitioned for its total abolition. The First Book of Discipline, in the compilation of which Knox had a chief hand, and which was ratified by the General Assembly, expressly declares, in opposition to “the election of ministers in this cursed papistrie,” that it appertaineth to the people, and to every several congregation, to elect their minister.” That the practice of that period corresponded with the principle, appears from the form of election of superintendents, ministers, and elders, embodied by Knox, in his History of the Reformation. The Second Book of Discipline, composed with the help of Melville, and ratified by several General Assemblies of the Church, denounces patronage as of Popish origin, and inconsistent with the order of election therein prescribed, and mentions the abolition of it as one of the special heads of reformation craved by the Church. When at any time the Presbyterian Church signified her practical acquiescence in the rights of patrons, it was always with some such *salvo* as this, “until they can be got removed according to law.” For the reasons of this acquiescence (not approval,) particularly at the settlement of Presbytery in 1592, together with the methods taken by the church courts to neutralize its tendency, permit me to refer you to the Life of Melville, vol. i., p. 320, and note EE. of the 2d edition, where you

will find a number of facts and documents, bearing on the subject, collected. Whenever the civil powers were favourable to the Presbyterian Church (which cannot properly be said to have been the case during the reigns of James VI. or Charles I.,) she was relieved from the grievance. The preamble to the Act of Parliament 1649, abolishing patronage, confirms all that I have said as to the principles of the Church of Scotland, and contains a summary of the reasons which justify a similar statute in our day. That statute is, of course, among the rescinded acts; but the Acts of the General Assembly of the same year, thanking the Parliament for the abolition, and settling the mode of electing ministers, maintain their ecclesiastical authority to this day. Patronage, as you know, was again abolished at the Revolution, and reimposed in 1712. So unpopular was this last law, that during a number of years scarcely a patron presented, and no presentee accepted, so that the Presbyterians thought they had completely disarmed the noxious statute, when they obtained in 1719, an Act of Parliament declaring that a presentation was of no effect unless it was accepted. In this they were grievously mistaken; for presentees soon conquered their shyness, applied for, and accepted presentations, and the church courts came gradually to sustain them, in spite of the greatest opposition on the part of the people, though they still continued to profess their wish for the abolition of patronage, and petition the Government for it—until 1784 (I think,) when the General Assembly agreed to drop the instruction to that effect annually given to their Commission. I hope I have said enough to show you, at least, that in seeking the abrogation of the patronage law, we introduce no novelty into the Church, but proceed on an old principle, and crave a reform of an abuse, and restoration of a privilege granted at the Revolution, secured by the Union, and taken away in violation of its stipulations, express and solemn. May it not with justice be expected that a

Whig ministry and Parliament should restore what a Tory ministry and Parliament took away? Sir H. Moncrieff, in an appendix to the Life of Dr. Erskine, has said that both parties in the Church were now agreed not to agitate the patronage question; but in coming to that opinion and expressing it, I am strongly inclined to think that he, and those who agreed with him (for he did not speak the language of all his friends) were influenced by the overwhelming majorities who opposed them in the General Assembly, together with the determination of the Government not to repeal the patronage law; and I am not prepared to believe that he would have held the same opinion now, when such a great change has taken place in the political state and franchise of the country.

“In the second place, I know that some good men in the Church are partial to the plan you suggest of giving the initiation to the patron, with a veto upon it to the people; but I confess it does not recommend itself to my mind. Not to insist on objections to patronage in general, as incompatible with the liberties of a Christian church, and with the genius of Presbytery in particular, I would beg leave to suggest that there is something in the idea of nomination by an individual which is repulsive to a body, and tends to rouse resistance. So long as patrons are known to possess by law the right to present, together with the power of providing that their presentees are inducted, if they satisfy the Presbytery as to their general qualifications, the deference which any particular patron may be pleased to pay to the opinions of the congregation is regarded as a boon, and received accordingly. But let the new plan be adopted, and let the people know that they have a right in every instance to thwart the patron, the feeling will be quite different; looking on his initiation as a restriction of their liberty, and an obstruction of his judgment as superior to theirs, they will resolve on nullifying it, and asserting their own

rights. How would such a plan work? Must there be a second nomination, a third, &c., by the patron, in case of opposition? and must the congregation be kept in the mean time vacant? I am aware of the influence which power, exerted with moderation and wisdom, has upon the popular mind, in reconciling it even to arbitrary prerogative; and had this been practised by patrons, or by freeholders and town-councils, the cry for liberty, ecclesiastical or political, would have been feeble, and the people generally satisfied. But I am disposed to hold it as a principle in legislation, and in the management of societies, civil or religious, that it is impolitic and unwise to keep up the mere name and show of exclusive privilege or pre-eminence when it is intended virtually to yield it up, and when circumstances are such as that *de facto* it must be powerless. The continuance of any restriction which is unnecessary, only raises jealousy and irritation. The influence of a pious and judicious heritor will always be great; his right of nomination would be comparatively nugatory, while its tendency would be to defeat the moral influence of his character and rank. At least, such is my opinion.

“Thirdly, as to the principle on which the abrogation of patronage, and the restoration of the rights of the Christian people should be pleaded, I am quite aware of the objections to occupying the Scripture ground in Parliament; but there is one point which may be urged any where, and cannot fail to have its weight, namely, that all candid writers, Episcopalian and Presbyterian, Popish and Protestant, allow, that bishops and other ministers were chosen by the Church at large, including the Christian people, not only at the beginning of Christianity, but for several ages after the church was established by law. This supersedes the necessity of entering on the Scripture argument. But the proper line of parliamentary argument, I should humbly think, is that which embraces the avowed principles and claims

of the Church of Scotland, as laid down in her public acts and proceedings, together with the hurtful effects of patronage.

“In fine, the expediency and utility, if not necessity, of the abolition may be urged by various considerations—the divisions it has caused in the Church—numerous parishes groaning or wasting under an unevangelical, heartless, inefficient ministry,—for that town churches are no proper test by which to judge of the state of those in the country I need not tell you;—ever since the present ministry came into power, the Crown Patronage has (I am sorry to say) been arbitrarily exercised, and in one parish by far the greater part of the population would have by this time dissented, had they been able to erect a chapel; the sincere friends of religion are aroused from the torpor into which the despair of reform had long sunk them, and the cry for the removal of the obnoxious law will spread; the extension of the political franchise has contributed to this, and wise men will judge how incongruous it would be (especially in Scotland, where the people have always shown a superior zeal for religious rights) for men to be free in the State and enslaved in the Church, and what a deleterious influence this anomaly would have on the interest and credit of religion;—the greater part of dissenters are now leagued in an attempt to overthrow all Church Establishments, and so long as things remain as they are, or a thorough reform in providing ministers is not adopted, the number of such enemies will daily increase. I think it of less consequence to know what effect the proposed measure would have in inducing Dissenters to re-enter the Church. The extent of this none can pretend to say; it would be gradual, and all its influence would be in that direction. If the modification plan is adopted, I would say, it will induce none to enter, though undoubtedly, so far as it goes, it will be an internal benefit to the Church. Patronage has caused other abuses, which, considering their dura-



tion, could not be removed in a day. Conscientious and reflecting persons would take this into account, and make large allowances for a church striving to reform herself; but they would wish to see good evidence that the work was begun, and that there was a single aim and desire to prosecute it, before they would feel at liberty to break up their present connexions, or to enter into a church where they might find their consciences pinched and distressed, and perhaps their sphere of usefulness contracted.

“Thus have I given you a frank statement of my views on the topic you suggested. Excuse the freedom with which I have stated them, and believe me, Dear Sir, yours very faithfully,

“THO. M'CRIE.”

“To J. C. Colquhoun, Esq.

“EDINBURGH, Feb. 11, 1834.

“MY DEAR SIR,—I agree that the question stated in yours of the 6th inst. is by no means a speculative, but a practical one. So far as I understand Presbyterian principles, the direction and arrangement of all matters relating to the government, as well as to the doctrine and worship of the Church, belongs properly to the ecclesiastical courts,—not only the administration of the government, but also the declaration and settlement of the government itself. And the admission of ministers, with what relates to it, I look upon as one of the most important branches of ecclesiastical polity. What would the Parliament have thought if the General Assembly had claimed the right of deciding and determining who should be electors of the members of the House of Commons, and what their qualifications should be? The essential distinction between Church and State—ecclesiastical and civil government, and the independence of each within its own province, are integral principles of the Presbyterian constitution, when maintained in its purity; they form the hinge of the controversy

between Presbyterians and Erastians (as they are called,) and a broad line of distinction between the Scotch and English Church, in any of the shapes which the latter has ever assumed since the Reformation; and are diametrically opposed to the "alliance" of Bishop Warburton, one of the leading features of which is, that the Church yields up her independence for the sake of the secular advantages which she acquires by entering into connexion with the State. For these principles the Church of Scotland contended earnestly in her best times, and not a few of her sons suffered imprisonment, exile, and death. In fact, they were the main subject of her contest against the encroachments of the house of Stuart; and there have not been wanting encroachments of a similar kind since the Revolution, though not accompanied with the same violence and tyranny. Every thing, therefore, that wears the appearance of this is highly suspicious, and ought to be scrutinized and watched with the greatest jealousy. On this account I was glad to see the proceedings of the Glasgow Presbytery controverted in the Scottish Guardian.

"What the State may do in extraordinary circumstances, as when a regular Church does not exist, or when it has fallen into a disorganized state, I will not determine; but when there is a constituted Church, and that, too, established, there cannot be the same reason for the State taking into its hands a matter that is properly ecclesiastical. It is a maxim on this subject with the most approved Presbyterian writers (See Gillespie's 'Aaron's Rod Blossoming'—a quaint title, but an admirable book,) that the magistrate's power *circa sacra* is not privative but cumulative. The Confession of Faith 1560, was drawn up, not by the Parliament, but by the ministers, the virtual representatives of the Church; and the circumstances of the time excuse the want of a formal assembly, or ecclesiastical judicatory. It was indeed read, and deliberately considered in Parliament, before it was ratified. This was highly proper,

for Parliament is as independent within its province as any ecclesiastical court can be within its province, and is not bound to ratify or give its sanction to any formula or document merely because it has been drawn up and approved by an ecclesiastical assembly. This also is the Presbyterian principle, as opposed to the Popish tenet, that civil authorities are bound implicitly to ratify and execute the decisions of the Church.

“ I do not think that the Second Book of Discipline lays down any doctrine different from what I have advanced. The words you quote are qualified and explained by what follows in the same and in the following paragraph. They do not state that the magistrate is to make laws settling the policy of the Church (that belongs to the governors of the Church, according to the principles laid down in the preceding chapter,) but to make ‘ laws and constitutions *for the advancement* of the Kirk and policie thereof,’ which supposes that both are in existence independently of his laws, though they may be advanced by them. If the Parliament were to abolish all the laws in favour of patronage, leaving it to the General Assembly to settle the mode of election and admission according to the principles of the Church, and declaring that all who were thus admitted should become *ipso facto* entitled to the stipends, &c., this would be a law ‘ agreeably to the word of God for the advancement of the Kirk and policie thereof.’

“ I cannot absolutely vindicate all that was done by the Parliament 1690, but their circumstances were very different from ours. The Church was in a state of disorganization: no General Assembly had met since the Revolution, nor could well meet in the confused state of things, until called together by that Parliament. Its acts establishing Presbytery and abolishing Patronage, were, in the general view of them, agreeable to what had been formerly demanded by the Presbyterian Church, though some of the best friends of that church were then and afterwards dis-

satisfied with some things connected with both these acts. The Westminster Confession, ratified at the Revolution, had been formally received and approved by the General Assembly before the Restoration; and as Patronage had been always regarded as a grievance, its abolition, though accompanied with restrictions, was hailed as a boon; but the Parliament of 1690 would have done well to have imitated its predecessor of 1649; and had they done so, it is my opinion that even the Tory Ministry of Queen Anne would not have ventured on the step of restoring patronages. Half measures are always hazardous. But why should we be bound up to what was done by Parliament in 1690, any more than what was done in 1711—12? Have we just emerged from the vortex of a Revolution? Do our circumstances bear any resemblance to those of Scotland, when the Government had to contend with a powerful party, then in arms for the purpose of restoring the exiled family, and at the same time violently and inveterately opposed to Presbytery,—considerations which had great weight in inducing wise men to bear with any partial encroachments made on the rights of the Church, and the niggardly or jealous manner in which liberty was dealt out to the Christian people? Did Lord Grey and his colleagues, in forming the late Reform Bill, take the Revolution Parliaments as their model in granting political privileges and suffrages? And should we scruple to put this question to them? Or should we suffer ourselves to be chained down, as by enchantment, to what was done in 1690?

“ You will see that I by no means approve of the petition of the Glasgow Presbytery. Not to speak at present of the place it gives to heritors, I think it affords a dangerous precedent for the State interfering with what properly belongs to the Church. It affords also a handle to those within the Church, who are enemies to popular rights to say, that those who seek the removal of patronage, are exposing the

whole ecclesiastical constitution to hazard by putting it into the hands of Parliament to interfere with its internal arrangements. If the Presbytery of Glasgow had embodied their propositions in the form of an overture to the General Assembly, to be sent by it as a petition to Parliament, the evil I have alluded to would have been avoided. But no Presbytery can be considered as expressing the sentiments or judgment of the Church of Scotland.

“I’d rather that patronage remain as it is, than sanction a principle alien and adverse to the Presbyterian polity; rather submit to a yoke imposed by the State, and forged in a barbarous age, with all the appendages of its rough manufacture, than willingly bend the neck and pray for a new one, though less galling and oppressive. When I say this, I beg you to recollect, that I express myself as a friend to the principles of Presbytery; for, as an individual, I would not petition Parliament to refer the matter to the General Assembly, having no confidence in it as presently constituted, and believing as I do, that the Legislature, provided they were to agree to repeal the patronage law, might be expected to be more favourable to the rights of the people, than the Assembly will be. Such is the consequence of the long continuance of an arbitrary law, and of the complete independence of the clergy upon the people,—the only check to which they can be legitimately subject according to the Presbyterian system.

“I have thus, at your request, given you my views on this question, and flatter myself that you will clearly comprehend my meaning.—I remain, &c.,  
THO. M’CRIE.”\*

\* “EDINBURGH, 6th March 1834.

“MY DEAR SIR,—Since my last to you, I have thought that I perhaps expressed myself in too unqualified a manner as to the Parliament’s supposed invasion on the Church’s province. No objection could be made justly, if our Parliament should, for example, enact, like the Parliament 1649, ‘Notwithstanding thereof (any presentation) to proceed to the planting of the Kirk upon the suit and calling, or with the consent, of the congregation,

We now approach what may be considered the last days of our author; for, though still able to discharge his usual ministerial duties, it was with a conscious failing of strength and sinking of spirits which betokened too surely to himself, that his days of usefulness were fast hastening to a close. It may surprise some to learn that it was not till this late period of his life that he seriously commenced the task of writing the *Life of Calvin*. He had, indeed, collected materials for this purpose several years before; but he would frequently observe, that it was impossible for him to finish it to his own satisfaction without personally consulting the ancient records of Geneva; and the obstacles which stood in the way of this, arising chiefly from his ministerial avocations, which he would on no account sacrifice to his literary projects, rendered it, in his opinion, impracticable. About the year 1831, a proposal was made by some of his literary friends, to send a qualified person to Geneva for this purpose, without putting him to any expense; but this he resolutely declined; and his materials might have lain untouched, had he not been induced, and almost impelled to the task of arranging them, by a circumstance which he could not help regarding as a providential call to exertion. To this he alludes in the following extract:—"December 4, 1832,—I

on whom none is to be obtruded against their will; and it is decreed, statute and ordained, that whosoever hereafter shall, upon the suit and calling of the congregation, after due examination of their literature and conversation, be admitted by the Presbytery into the exercise and function of the ministry in any parish within this kingdom, that the said person or persons, without a presentation, by virtue of their admission, hath sufficient right and title to possess the manse and glebe, and the whole rents, &c. And because it is needful that the just and proper interest of congregations and Presbyteries in providing of Kirks with ministers be clearly determined by the General Assembly, and what is to be accounted the congregation—it is seriously recommended to the next General Assembly clearly to determine the same," &c.

"Something like this would avoid all Erastianism, and at the same time would show the vigilance of Parliament over the rights of the Christian people. But enough of this at present.—I am, &c.,  
THO. M'CRIE."

begin to feel, perhaps too late, the justness of the wise man's saying, 'Much study is a weariness to the flesh.' Yet I feel a lingering fondness after the subject which I had commenced, and a species of aversion to leave it unfinished.\* Shall I yield to this, or listen to the voice of reason, speaking to my infirmities? I have one son now in Geneva, whither he went about two months ago, with the charge of two pupils, and where he purposes to remain with them at least during the winter. 'Well, what of that?' I meant to say, that while one of my sons, who was ready for taking license as a preacher, has for the present retired from that employment, his brother, who had been pursuing his studies for the bar, has exchanged them for theology. 'Yes, but have you no literary leanings to the quondam Protestant Athens and its Solon?' After what I have said, I would be a fool if I had; and yet who can answer for all the foolish thoughts which pass through his mind? Ten years ago, the advantages which now present themselves would have set my imagination agog, and made my pen like that of a swift writer. But ten years, at my time of life, make a great change, and impress a lesson of sobriety on the vainest mind. I will not conceal from you (for I am sure you will not make an improper use of the confidence) that I have directed certain inquiries to be made as to remaining documents; and after this, you will believe me when I add that I have formed no ulterior project, and that my endeavour is to suppress unavailing regrets, and to check desires which would tempt me to an undertaking beyond my strength."†

His son John, to whom this extract refers, was not one of those who could rest satisfied with fulfilling the letter of such a commission; with all the enthusiasm of youth, he entered into its spirit, and prosecuted his researches with such assiduity and success, that in a short time he had transmitted to his father

\* He refers to the papers on the Marrow Controversy.

† To the Rev. Dr. Watson.

large masses of extracts from manuscripts and rare works, containing much original and interesting information regarding Calvin. The effect of this on our author is thus described by him:—"November 21, 1833,—I have begun to do something connected with the Life of Calvin. John has been so laborious in his researches, and sent me home so many materials, that I found myself shut up to make an attempt, if it were for no other reason than to show that I was not altogether insensible to his exertions. I shall endeavour, at least, if I am spared in health, to put in order the materials that have been laid to my hand. Delay is sometimes productive of good, but oftener has evil effects. I can do nothing without continuous study, and I am not capable of sustaining it now without sensible injury. I have a competitor, too, a M. Henri of Berlin, who only waits transcripts from Geneva to put to press a Life of Calvin in two volumes."—"December 13, 1833,—I have got a second *fasciculus* from Geneva, which reaches to Calvin's death. John's diligence and ardour of research have put my indolence to the blush, and from sheer shame, I have written out in form a first chapter, bringing down the narrative to the close of his academical studies. But what is that?"

About this time he discovered that he had a competitor nearer home, unconsciously employed in the same work, the Rev. William K. Tweedie (then of London, now of Aberdeen,) who from pure veneration for the character and admiration of the writings of the Genevan Reformer, had collected materials for illustrating his life, which a residence on the continent had enabled him to enrich with a variety of interesting facts. No sooner had Dr. M'Crie ascertained this fact, than, with the disinterested promptitude which he manifested on all such occasions, he first apprized the unknown author of his being engaged in a similar work, and on learning who he was, and how far he had proceeded, he urged him to persevere, and offered to transfer to him the whole of his materials. Mr.



Tweedie, however, no sooner heard that Dr. M'Crie was engaged in preparing a Life of Calvin, than in a spirit hardly less admirable, he not only at once abandoned the idea of prosecuting his work, but cheerfully transmitted his manuscripts to our author, who was anxious to see them, accompanied with a request to make any use of them he might think proper. This friendly contest issued in Dr. M'Crie consenting to proceed with his work; as will appear from the following correspondence.

October 23, 1833, Mr. Tweedie writes, "I ought to begin apologizing for the liberty I take in addressing you; but having introduced myself to you as the 'young clerical friend' of whom Mrs. S—— of —— spoke to you in connexion with a Life of Calvin, you will understand, and I doubt not, pardon, the cause of this intrusion. I had a letter yesterday from that lady, in which she imparts confidentially to me what you had allowed her to do to the friend of whom she spoke, your purpose of adding a Life of Calvin to the other Biographies which you have already given us. As I have been for many years a devoted admirer of that wonderful man, and had turned my attention so early as the year 1830 to the meagreness of all the accounts which have hitherto been published of him, the idea could not but occur of supplying the deficiency. I hoped that John Scott of Hull would have furnished us with something worthy of Calvin, and was not a little mortified that Scott's work, 'Calvin and the Swiss Reformers,' lately published, was but a meagre translation of Beza's original life of his friend, eked out with a few anecdotes from Sennebier—whose life, in passing, appears to me the best we have."

After referring to the researches which he had made, he adds, "The period has now come, however, for which I have long waited, and I cannot well express to you the satisfaction which I felt on learning yesterday, that you contemplated the work. My endeavours were directed to it, only because I thought

it an ignoble thing for one so conspicuous as Calvin was for all that is great in our *ruined* nature, and much of what is transcendent in our *renewed* nature, should remain buried as he is to thousands under the jeer of seiolists, and the very contemptible malice of certain degenerate men. I sincerely trust that by the extracts which your son furnishes from the Library of Geneva,—where Calvin's opinions, I regret to say, are now confined nearly to his own volumes and manuscripts,—will put it in your power to restore Calvin and Knox to each other's society once more, and place the '*par nobile fratrum*' as high in the esteem of all good men, as they formerly were in each other's.—I beg again to say, that from yesterday I waive all purpose of giving my gleanings to the public, rejoicing, as I most heartily do, to give place to one who has already in himself experienced, and given so many thousands the power of experiencing along with him, the pleasure of which Valerius Maximus speaks when he says, *Exultat animus maximorum virorum memorium percurrens.*"

"To the Rev. William K. Tweedie, London.

"EDINBURGH, October 28, 1832.

"REV. DEAR SIR,—I cannot allow my first leisure day to pass without answering your obliging letter. You needed not either to begin or conclude by apologizing, as you could not have done me a more acceptable favour than by writing me on such a subject. The sentiments you express respecting Calvin would have been a sufficient introduction—I will not use the word apology—at any time or in any circumstances. I could not but be struck with the singular coincidence in the feelings which have led us to make choice of the same subject. For many years I had been in the habit of marking referenes to any thing of moment relating to Calvin which occurred in the course of my reading, but without the least serious idea of writing his life. So far from it, when any of my friends suggested the work, I either laughed

at the proposal or rejected it. But the thought haunted me, that it was disgraceful that nothing should be done to rescue from obloquy the character of a man to whom the Reformed Church, and indeed the Church of Christ at large, owed so much; and (will you believe it?) the appearance of Scott's Life, which you characterize so justly, was the very thing which fixed my determination, so far as it is yet fixed.

“But I proceed too fast, and must recur to what I intended to have begun by stating. I do not know in what terms Mrs. S——— may have written you, nor do I even recollect exactly how I expressed myself to her, but I know what my feelings were. Learning from that lady that a friend of hers had made large collections for a Life of Calvin, and supposing that he was far advanced in the work, I thought it but fair to give her liberty to inform him, that I was labouring behind him in the same field, that he might avail himself of the advantage he had by prior occupation and more advanced progress. This I would have done to any fellow-labourer of whom I heard any thing favourable. Of course I did not know whether you were Presbyterian, Episcopalian, or Independent—though my impression rather was that you belonged to the Church of England. Your yielding the ground to me, how flattering soever it may be, was what I neither wished nor expected; and one object of my writing at present is to urge you to reconsider the grounds of your resolution. Permit me to say, that it is neither doing justice to yourself nor to the undertaking, to decide in one day on the disposal of what has cost the labour of years. The only advantage I can have over you is having meditated a little longer on the character of Calvin, and perhaps having had my attention a little more turned to the times in which he lived. But to counterbalance this you have on your side youth, enthusiasm, an elegant pen, materials which you have gathered in the course of travelling, and what is not

of small importance in authorship as in other things—a first love. These considerations (not to mention the risk, at my time of life, of my failure in the attempt) should, I think, induce you to alter—allow me to call it—the hasty abandonment of your design. If you agree to do so, you may depend on any assistance I can afford you; nor do I suppose I would find any great difficulty in getting myself released from any indirect obligations I have brought myself under, in which case I shall most readily transfer to you the whole of my materials.

“If you should continue in your resolution, I will avail myself with pleasure of your kind offer of assistance, which cannot fail to be of the most essential service to me. But in this case I am afraid you may be assailed with a personal visit, for I scarcely think that I would be satisfied with such communications as can be made by letter. In the mean time, I shall frankly acquaint you with the guides with which I am provided.”

*November 15, 1833.*—“I have not succeeded with you in my attempt to persuade, and not having Farel’s thunder, I shall not presume to terrify you into the task; only you must allow me to say that you failed in your parallel; for Calvin, you must remember, was then the *young* man. You are, however, very kind in offering your assistance, and I beg you not to say or think that this is a small matter. All my correspondence with you now must proceed on the contrary supposition.”

*December 19, 1833.*—“I have read your disquisition on Servetus carefully, and mean to read it again more carefully. I take it for granted you have no objection to its lying beside me. I have no doubt that, according to the laws in force at Geneva, as well as elsewhere, the punishment of Servetus, on his being found guilty, was a matter of course; nor do I think it can be proved that Calvin did any thing in that affair but what he was bound to do, agreeably to those laws, and his own views of Scripture and

criminal jurisprudence. My objections are to the law itself, which authorizes the capital punishment of heretics, and that not merely because it may be extended to all heresy, or what the judges might pronounce heresy, and consequently to the reformed opinions in the Roman Catholic countries, but also because I cannot think that heresy, *as such*, is a crime in the eye of the State. Had the law been against blasphemy, or heresy assuming that form, much might be said in favour of punishing those who rail at or revile the Being whom the State adored, and certainly Servetus was chargeable with this high offence. It is in this light that Calvin and Beza view his conduct in their tracts, but then their arguments often go farther, and would authorize punishment even to the death against simple heresy. Spanheim, Turretin, &c., always consider it as blasphemy when they speak of the death of Servetus, and vindicate or apologize for the sentence against him. Considering the nature of the heretic's conduct, the odium which Geneva had contracted as a receptacle of heretics, and the outcry which had been made against Calvin as an anti-trinitarian, I would have justified the Council of Geneva for punishing Servetus, or detaining him in prison. But besides the horror that I feel at blood or fire in any thing immediately connected with religion, I am afraid of any principle which leads either to persecution or to a confounding of the objects of civil and ecclesiastical jurisdiction. You know I am a strenuous opponent of the plan of divorcing religion from civil government; I view the former, taken in a large or rather a general sense, as the basis of the latter, and its firmest support. At the same time, I have long held it as a principle, that it is only when religious opinions or their avowal directly injure the proper interests of the State (and not formally as dishonouring to God,) that they become the objects of civil restraint or criminal punishment; and that the laws of the State ought to be so regulated as not to make the simple declaration or defence of opinions,

in matters of faith, punishable. This being the case, you will see I am not prepared to go your length in the vindication of Calvin, at least if I have interpreted right what you have said. At the same time, your reflections will be of great use to me, and on reconsidering them I may perceive more force in them than struck me at first reading. Any thing farther from you on that delicate subject will be most acceptable. I would not fear the misconstructions of the world, nor the outcry of persecution from the mouths of latitudinarians, could I perceive firm ground to stand upon. 'The argument from expediency may be wielded both ways.'

March 25, 1835.—“In what a singular condition are both Church and State at present! If you and I had it in our power, and were at liberty, to retire and to spend two years in some sequestered island, in writing a joint Life of Calvin, could we conjecture by all our mutual cogitations, during our hours of relaxation, in the interval, what would be the actual situation in which we would find our native country on our return at the end of that period? The changes which take place so unexpectedly should teach us to look beyond men, and beyond the measures which they contemplate (I include churchmen and statesmen,) to the hand and counsel of Him who has the hearts of all in his hand, who uses them for the accomplishment of some of his minor purposes in the mean time; but whose designs are as far above theirs as the heavens are above the earth, and who will not want instruments for the accomplishment of them, whenever the time, the set time, has come. But I am beginning to *preach* to you—it is, however, *Calvinistic doctrine*.”—I am, my dear Sir, ever yours, very faithfully,  
 “THO. M'CRIE.”

The letters which passed between Dr. M'Crie and his son on the Continent, are valuable as documents, but being chiefly occupied either with private matters, or with hints and suggestions regarding the in-

quiries in which he was engaged, they are not fitted for insertion here. He was still receiving fresh supplies of materials from Geneva; but, he observes, July 1834, "I have neither time nor leisure to avail myself of them; and instead of rejoicing, as I used to do, at the sight of such treasures, I rather feel inclined to weep. Yet if I can make nothing of them, some other may." It is truly affecting, indeed, in perusing the correspondence between the father and the son (now that they are both silent in the grave!) to observe how the fading energies of the one struggled to keep pace with, and to reward, the youthful zeal and affectionate toils of the other. But what with his increasing infirmities, and the perpetual interruptions which he was meeting with, from visitors, correspondence, public meetings, applications for assistance in literary undertakings or on sacramental occasions, with his ordinary ministerial duties, to which were now added the labours of the Divinity Hall,\* his time was so completely broken up and consumed, that, as we shall afterward see, he was able to proceed only a little farther with the *Life of Calvin*, when he was called away from all his labours.

His mind, which now began to cherish the impression of being soon removed from this world, was repeatedly recalled to the exercise becoming such a prospect, by the successive deaths of several of his brethren in the ministry. I find him thus referring, in November 1833, to the death of Mr. M'Derment of Auchinleck: "O what a loss have we sustained in the death of our dear brother M'Derment! Old as I am, I cannot help yet weeping at the thought. There was so much of the milk of human kindness about him, so much gentleness, so much piety, so much anxiety to do good, so much zeal for the good cause!

\* In 1833, he agreed to assist the late Professor Paxton in conducting the studies of the theological class. Though he delivered no regular course of lectures, but confined himself chiefly to examination and biblical criticism, the preparations required for such a task necessarily occupied much of his time.

He had his faults, no doubt (though I know them not,) like all on earth born of woman, and born again of the Spirit; but take him all in all, we shall not soon see his like again. Let us remember the end of his conversation." Next year brought him tidings of the departure of his venerable friend Mr. Aitken of Kirriemuir, who died on the 24th of Sept. 1834, in the 78th year of his age, and 56th of his ministry. Writing to his son, Sept. 30, he says: "Though the tidings it conveyed could not be said to be unexpected, your letter produced a feeling which partook of surprise. The accounts I had heard flattered the hope, that a vigorous constitution, aided by medical skill and domestic attention, would resist, for some time longer, the advance of disease. But He who knows our frame, both of body and mind, and in whose hands our lives are, has ordered it otherwise, and we should believe it was wisely and kindly ordered. 'It is done.' A long, laborious, and useful life is finished. He has rested from his labours,—escaped from bodily pain and mental anxiety—from a body of death, an evil world, and an evil time. Some of us must soon follow, and those of us who may survive for any long time, know not the trials, private and public, which await us, and from the sight and enduring of which he has been taken away in mercy and in wisdom. The grace, however, which sustained and carried him through in the midst of his duties and temptations, is sufficient for us. Let us follow his faith, and the other graces which he was helped to display, both in life and death. He has been spared to his family and the church longer than many—longer than, from repeated warnings, we had reason to expect. Let our selfish feelings yield to gratitude." Still he continued to take a warm concern in public matters. Like a leal-hearted Seceder of the old school, he was deeply interested in the fortunes of the Church of Scotland, and sincerely rejoiced in any symptoms which he observed in the character of her clergy, or her administration, of a disposition to return to the good old way



of their fathers. His prospects, however, on this point, were now and then shaded with that "pale cast of thought" which characterized his views of public affairs in general, and were apt to give place to melancholy forebodings, as soon as any tokens of an opposite tendency came under his notice. "What fools our church folks are," he says, January 21, 1835, "to identify their cause with Toryism at the present day, to alienate the Whigs, and to oblige them to league with Radicals, to give them an excuse for deserting the defence of the Church, whenever they shall find it safe or politically wise to do so! Don't you think that our times bear a great resemblance to those of 1640 in England, with this difference (great indeed,) that there is not the same religious spirit in Parliament and in the public which existed at that period? How a collision between the aristocracy and the commons (not to speak of the monarchy) is to be avoided, I do not see. The public mind is much more extensively enlightened as to politics than it was in 1793, and it has got a power—a lever which it did not then possess." March 5, 1835.—I have no doubt, I have a great portion of the incredulity of my namesake, and would wish to say, with respect to public prospects, 'Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.'

Nothing gave him more pleasure than to hear that the General Assembly in May 1835, had appointed a day of public fasting—an assertion of the intrinsic power of the Church, which he did not anticipate,\* and which, reminding him of her better days, appeared a token for good. Writing to his daughter, July 17, 1835, he says, "It will not be in my power to see you next week, as it is probable my session will agree to keep our Synod Fast on Thursday

\* On the Sabbath after the appointment of the fast, not being aware of it, he said, in the course of his sermon, "Will they venture to appoint a fast on their own authority?" and he was no less astonished than delighted to learn from Dr. Burns, at the conclusion of the service, that what he evidently did not expect had actually been done the day before.

first,—the day of the Assembly's fast. You know, I never had any public worship on a King's fast, but when the church courts of the Establishment, or of any denomination of Christians, set apart a day for humiliation, we have no objection to avail ourselves of the day; and at present, we rather see reason for approving of the Assembly's conduct, in so far as they have resumed the exercise of their own ecclesiastical powers, which they had so long yielded up to the State, in such appointments. I am aware the Voluntaries think the fast is appointed to *pray them down*. If this be the case, they have no reason to fear their prayers or their fasting; but I trust that many ministers of the Establishment have higher and better motives, though no doubt there will be much formality—as, alas! there is among ourselves. It is supposed, the Dissenters generally will keep their shops open, and their churches shut. They did not use to do that on days of *royal appointment*.”\*

In the “Reasons of a Fast,” which were drawn out by him, and published 18th July 1835, a very short time before his decease (indeed, it was the last published production of his pen,) we meet with the following remarks, which have struck many as peculiarly applicable to the present state of the Church of Scotland:—“Though we may overlook our national guilt, which has long been accumulating, yet God does not forget it; and it has been his usual way to inflict his judgments upon a people favoured with divine revelation,—*not at the time when they are in a state of growing defection and deep insensibility, but after they have been brought, by means of the Word or some awakening providence, to a sense of their danger, and have discovered symptoms of a disposition to return to the path of duty; as it is at such seasons that they are most likely to recognise His hand in the judgments inflicted.* It was not in the days of Ahaz, but in the days of godly Hezekiah, that the captivity of the Jews was threatened;

\* See before, p. 99.

nor was it at the close of the reign of Manasseh, when defection from the cause of God seemed to have come to its height, but at the close of the reign of Josiah, when there had been a remarkable revival, that the Lord proceeded to plead his controversy with his people by executing that threatening. Hence that striking declaration which closes the narrative of the several steps of reformation under Josiah's reign: ‘Notwithstanding the Lord turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal. And the Lord said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there.’ Let none entertain the presumptuous hope that we will escape national judgments, because, from this country, by means of missionary exertions, the Gospel has been carried to distant nations, where the name of Jesus was not formerly known; so long as our national sins have not been confessed and mourned over before the Lord, and so long as the great body of the nation are going on in a course of backsliding. It was at the time when the law went forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem to the Gentile nations by the instrumentality of the apostles, that God proceeded to bring upon the Jewish church and nation, ‘all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom they slew between the temple and the altar.’”\*

There can be no doubt, however, that long before this time his heart had been greatly alienated from the world, and tired of the troubled scenes of its politics, civil and ecclesiastical. His health, though in his latter years apparently robust, from his having lost the spare and wasted look which distinguished him during the greater part of his life, was by no means

\* Reasons of a Fast, appointed by the Associate Synod of Original Seceders. P. 4. 1835.

sound, having sustained several severe shocks from various disorders, particularly *tic doloureux*, and erysipelas, accompanied by something resembling gout; and in the beginning of 1835, his constitution gave evident symptoms of breaking up. He himself became quite sensible of this. In May he thus refers to these warnings of dissolution: "I was confined for three weeks, chiefly to bed; and though my complaints are in a good degree removed, strength has not returned; I can walk no distance, and half an hour's speaking exhausts me. I suppose I must look on it as indicating the climacteric of my life; at any rate as warning me that I cannot look for the health I have enjoyed."\* From certain symptoms which he experienced, he was led to express an apprehension (similar to that of his friend Dr. Andrew Thomson) that he "would die soon and suddenly." He frequently complained that he "had too much to do;" a feeling which no doubt arose partly from a failing of his former strength, but, in no small degree, from the accumulated labours by which it was overtaken. Demands, without number and without mercy, were made on him for counsel and assistance; and so long as he had a moment to spare, though at the expense of health and strength, he could not, in the benignity of heart, refuse an application. "I have submitted," he says,† "not brought myself under a task which occupies me the whole week; and the nature of which I am ashamed to tell you, though important in itself. There are some people born to be beasts of burden, just as there are beasts made to be taken and destroyed."

Having recruited a little during the summer of 1835, he undertook several excursions—not for relaxation, but to assist in the laborious duties of a Scottish communion, in different congregations, both in the north and the west country. He felt particularly anxious to visit the bereaved flock of his lamented brother, Mr. Smith

\* To the Rev. James Gray.

† To Dr. Watson.

of Kilwinning, and administered to them the consolations which his own people were so soon to require. It was uniformly remarked, both by ministers and people, that on these occasions his ministrations and private converse were distinguished by a heavenly unction exceeding that of his usual manner, and indicating his near approach to "the joy of his Lord." The subjects, as well as the manner of his discourses, could not have been more appropriate, though he had known assuredly that "those among whom he had gone preaching the kingdom of God, should see his face no more." The greater part of the week immediately preceding his death, he spent, at a considerable distance from home, in the society of his only daughter, to whom he was bound by no ordinary attachment, and the state of whose health at the time was so very precarious, that on parting with her, she took her farewell of him, never expecting to see him again. Her fears were too well realized—though in a manner very different from that which she anticipated.

It may not be considered out of place here to mention, that as he approached the closing scene of his pilgrimage, his thoughts seem to have reverted, with singular force, to his earlier days. A short time before his departure, he repeated to an intimate friend a dream, which, on his awakening from it (or rather in the midst of it, for it appeared to strike him between sleeping and waking,) left a deep impression on his mind. He dreamed that his *mother* had appeared to him, wearing the same aspect, though deadly pale, as when he last parted with her on Coldingham Moor,\* and beckoning on him to follow her, which he promised to do! No man could be less superstitious, or disposed to treat such fancies with less regard; but this morning vision coincided too well with the train of his waking apprehensions, to be soon shaken off; and it proves, if nothing else, his undying affection

\* See before, p. 16.

for that pious parent, with whom his first religious impressions were associated, and to whose spirit his own was on the eve of a blessed reunion.

On Thursday the 23d of July (the day appointed by the General Assembly) he kept a fast in his own congregation, taking for his text Jeremiah l. 5: "They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten." It was observed by his people, that he never preached in better spirits, or with more solemn effect. On the Sabbath following, he officiated twice in his own pulpit, with his usual animation, lecturing in the forenoon on John xxi. 15—18, and preaching in the afternoon on these striking words, Matthew iii. 12: "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." It was observed that, at the close of the service, contrary to his usual practice, he seated himself at the door of the vestry, and watched the people while they were retiring, till they had all gone out. On Monday, he was much in his usual health, and entertained a small party of friends at dinner in his wonted spirits. The evening of this day he spent in writing to his son John, who was then on his way to Vienna, giving him, in his own homely way, all the news, public and domestic, which he thought might interest him; and hinting, though in the mildest terms, and without indicating any apprehension of the near approach of death, his fears that he might not be spared to finish the *Life of Calvin*.\*

\* In this letter, the latter part of which is dated August 3, he says, "I regret to tell you, that I have been able to do nothing to Calvin since I wrote. I cannot accomplish my preparations for the pulpit within less time than Friday and Saturday, having abandoned *extempore* effusions for a number of years. In addition to this and my other avocations, I had an illness in the spring, which confined me for a considerable time. I am told it is connected with the climacteric of life, and consider it as admonishing me that I cannot now bear the study and confinement to which I was accustomed. At present I feel recruited, and if

This letter he did not live to complete. On Tuesday, the 4th of August, after having returned home from visiting some of his people, he was seized in the afternoon with a sudden and severe attack of pain in the bowels. Medical advice having been procured, he obtained some relief; and to the anxious inquiries of his friends, he said he was better, and had no fears of any immediate danger. Shortly afterwards, he fell into a slumber, which soon assumed a very alarming character. He had gradually and insensibly sunk into a stupor, out of which it was found impossible to awaken him. Dr. Abereromby, on being sent for, pronounced his recovery hopeless. The disease had all the symptoms of apoplexy; and during the whole of the trying night which followed, he neither spoke, nor gave signs of being sensible of what was addressed to him. In this state he continued till next day, Wednesday the 5th of August 1835, when, about half-past twelve at noon, surrounded by his friends and many of his beloved flock, who had collected to witness his last moments, without a groan or a struggle, his spirit entered into rest. At his death, he was in the sixty-third year of his age, and the fortieth of his ministry.

It would be impossible to describe the feelings of grief and astonishment which pervaded all classes on hearing of the fatal event. So wholly unexpected was the intelligence—so confidently had the public counted on the continuance, for many years to come, of a life from which they still anticipated much, that, when first announced to them, few could believe in the reality of his death. Judging from the numerous expressions of regret and con-

spered, will resume the work after harvest; and endeavour to prosecute it with application, moderated according to my strength. When at any time I am prevented or disabled from proceeding, I am hurt by the thought of the great labour you have taken in amassing the materials. This is wrong, as it was done for the best, and Providence can so direct as that they shall be turned to a good account, though I should be unfit for the task. I am also relieved by the reflection, that the fatigue you have had will be beneficial to your own mind."

dolence, public and private, which followed on the announcement, there are few instances in which the sorrows of a bereaved family have met with a wider or deeper response in the community at large.\*

The funeral having been fixed for the 12th of August, a general desire was expressed by persons of all denominations to join in testifying their respect for the memory of the departed. The Commission of the General Assembly, which met on that day, on the motion of Dr. Cook, appointed a deputation of their number, consisting of the Moderator, (Dr. William Thomson,) the clerk, and other members, to accompany the funeral. The preachers and students belonging to the respective Halls of the Establishment and the United Secession, requested leave to attend in a body. It was thus found necessary to make arrangements for a public funeral; and the mournful procession, amounting, it was said, to nearly 1500 persons, including the magistrates of the city and clergymen of all persuasions, accompanied his remains to the Greyfriars' church-yard. A monument, erected by his sorrowing flock, with an inscription expressive of their sense of the loss they had sustained, marks his final resting-place.

Several public bodies passed resolutions expressing their high sense of Dr. M'Crie's merits as a literary and public character, and their regrets at his removal. Among these, I cannot help specifying, with grateful feelings, the testimonial of the Synod of Ulster,—evincing, as it does, a warm admiration for the principles, as well as the talents, of our author, which augurs well for the future prospects of that now happily regenerated and daily rising portion of the Presbyterian Church. It is due to Lord Melbourne's government to state, that, through the representations of numerous admirers of

\* Dr. M'Crie left the following children (by the first marriage) namely,—the writer of these Memoirs, who is the eldest; William, merchant in Edinburgh; Jessie, married to Archibald Meikle, Esq., Flemington; John (who died in October 1837;) and George, who is now settled as minister in Clola, Aberdeenshire.



Dr. M'Crie's public character and services, among whom were the Lord Advocate, Lord Minto, and Sir George Sinclair, a handsome annuity was assigned to his widow.

The death of Dr. M'Crie being so sudden, so unexpected by himself, and so unheralded by any of those immediately premonitory symptoms which sometimes enable the Christian to collect his energies, and place himself in the attitude best fitted for the reception of the last enemy, we cannot furnish our readers with any record of death-bed exercise, similar to those which have so often and so profitably concluded such memoirs as the present. The disappointment of the pious reader may find some relief in the consideration, which brought comfort to his friends, that death did not meet him unprepared, and that, as he himself said of his friend Mr. Bruce, the manner of whose departure so much resembled his own, "he was taken away without pain, without sickness, without confinement, without any interruption of his ministerial work—after he had finished his labours, and when he was standing faithfully at his post." He might not have said of himself, though others may say it for him, "*se satis vixisse, vel ad vitam, vel ad gloriam.*" The whole tenor of his deportment and conversation, for some time before his death, was such as to strike all who closely observed it, that he was fast ripening for the world of light and love. "The remembrance of your father," says one who had frequent opportunities of the most familiar intercourse with him during his last days, "his fortitude, his meekness of wisdom, the holy serenity and beautiful consistency of his character—the warm interest he took in every worthy object that called it forth in this world, while yet he seemed with regard to his home in heaven like a man who had his ticket taken out for a journey, though he had not yet taken his seat, and was employing the interval in doing all he had left undone, with as little time as possible, and yet studiously well, as what was done for the last

time;—all these traits often recur with a most cheering, and sometimes, I would hope, with a sanctifying influence on my mind.”

Those familiar with the writings of Dr. M'Crie will here perhaps be reminded of the reflections which he makes on the absence of all information regarding the last hours of Andrew Melville, and may consider them applicable to his own case:—“It is natural for us to desire minute information respecting the decease of any individual in whose life we have taken a deep interest; and we cannot help feeling disappointed, when we are barely told that ‘he died.’ But laudable as this curiosity may be, and gratifying and useful as it often is to look upon the spiritual portraiture of good men at the hour of their dissolution, we ought not to forget that there is a still more decisive and unequivocal test of character. It was by the faith which he evinced during his life, that the first martyr ‘obtained witness that he was righteous; and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh.’ We have no reason to regret being left without any authentic record of the manner in which the apostles finished their course, when we ‘have fully known their doctrine, manner of life, purpose, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions.’”\*

The interest which the public has shown with regard to the manuscripts of Dr. M'Crie, and especially his unfinished *Life of Calvin*, demands a particular account of the state in which they have been left. Few of these manuscripts, I regret to say, are in such a state of preparation as would render it proper to publish them. The manuscript of *Calvin's Life* extends no farther than the commencement of a fourth chapter. Of the three chapters which have been fairly written out, and which may be considered fit for the press, the first contains an account of the early life of the Reformer, bringing it down to the close of his academical career. The second com-

\* *Life of Melville*, vol. ii., p. 460.

mences with a somewhat detailed history of the introduction of the Reformation into France, and the sufferings of its early martyrs; and resuming the biography of Calvin at 1533, when he embraced the reformed opinions, prosecutes it to 1535, giving an account of the Preface to his "Institution of the Christian Religion," but "reserving to a future stage a more particular account of the work." The third chapter is wholly occupied with a minute account of the city of Geneva, "its external relations and internal government, and the leading facts connected with the introduction of the Reformation into the city and its territories." The fourth chapter recommences the Life of Calvin at the period when he took up his residence in Geneva, but contains only two or three pages which are occupied with an account of the Anabaptists. The whole manuscript extends to no more than 105 quarto pages.

The regret which must be felt at hearing of the imperfect state in which this manuscript has been left, must be increased when we add, that there is no rude sketch from which we might have gathered some idea of the manner in which he would have treated the remaining portion of the Life. His plan of composition, as we have already remarked, was to work up his matter into shape as he went along. Materials, however, there are, in considerable abundance, chiefly collected by the son to whose labours we have already referred. And it was the fond hope of the family, as indeed it had been of his father, that he might be able, at some future period, to complete the work to the advancement of which he had so largely contributed. This hope was considerably abated by the discovery of the imperfect state in which the manuscripts had been left; and since then it has pleased an all-wise Providence to extinguish it, by removing from this earthly sphere the person on whom it rested. His connexion with this much desired work, may justify a passing notice of him in the present Memoir.

John was the fourth son of Dr. M'Crie, and was born May 19, 1808. From his earliest years he was remarkable for sedateness and gentleness of manners, thoughtfulness of mind, and prudence of behaviour. He passed through the ordinary course of education, literary and philosophical, in the High School and University of Edinburgh, distinguishing himself particularly in the classical department, and gaining the high approbation of his teachers. Though always serious in his deportment and attentive to his religious duties, it was not till the year 1829 that he acknowledged himself to have experienced a decided change of heart, and the avowal was made to his father in terms which left no doubt of the genuine character of his experience. He was then employed as tutor in the excellent family of James Ferguson, Esq., of Kinmundy. John had devoted himself to the holy ministry, and completed the usual course of study preparatory to receiving license; but having been requested to accompany two young gentlemen on a tour to the Continent, he embraced the opportunity of gratifying his ardent thirst for knowledge and turn for observation, and, as we have seen, set out on his travels in the end of 1832. On leaving Geneva, which they made their head-quarters for some time, he and his youthful companions travelled through France, Germany, Switzerland and Italy, visiting all the most celebrated cities, and interesting localities in these countries. His letters written to his friends during these excursions, abound with remarks on the scenery, the manners of the people, and incidents of travel, which display no ordinary powers of description. At Vienna, where he had just arrived in great spirits after a pleasant excursion, and in the open café, among a crowd of strangers, who were chatting in careless glee around him, he read the letter which conveyed the stunning intelligence of his father's death. This blow, which stript home of its main attraction, and deprived him of the reward he had fondly anticipated for all his labours, deter-

mined him to remain some time longer on the Continent. During his residence there, he had formed an acquaintance with a variety of literary characters, clergymen and professors in the universities, with whom, from his familiar acquaintance with the French and German languages, he was able to converse with facility, and to whose kindness, his engaging manners, his piety, and his good sense were powerful commendations. But with all his admiration for the character of the Germans, and the scholarship of their divines, he was quite alive to the mischief of German neology; his sound religious principles resisted the poison of Continental infidelity; while his heart was fairly won by the warmth, the simplicity, and the liberality of Continental piety. In the summer of 1836, the Directors of the Normal Seminary of Glasgow having, unsolicited on his part, offered him the situation of Rector in that institution, he accepted of the charge; and after paying a short visit to his friends, he returned to the Continent for the purpose of examining its schools, and procuring information on the various modes of infant and juvenile tuition. His whole attention was now bent on the subject of education; and after visiting the most famous institutions abroad, particularly those of Prussia, and procuring a great mass of information, he returned in the autumn, and commenced his labours in Glasgow. Entering with enthusiasm into his profession—anxious to do his best to advance the interests of an institution which had lately commenced its operations, and demanded all his time,—he literally gave himself no rest. Besides superintending the infant and juvenile schools, and directing the exercises of those who came to study the method of tuition, he delivered several public lectures on Education, the labour bestowed upon which was no less conspicuous than the ingenuity of their matter and the beauty of their style. These exertions proved too severe for his naturally delicate constitution; and in August 1837, he was attacked with typhus fever, and fell a victim to its

effects, on the 4th of October following, in the 29th year of his age.

Mild, affable, and polite in his manners; affectionate and obliging in his disposition; playful and humorous, and yet bearing about him an air of gravity and authority, and which gave him an influence, even in early life, over his more volatile companions; sagacious in discerning character; with an acute judgment and a lively imagination,—the leading features of his mind, as well as those of his countenance, exhibited a very close resemblance to those of his father. In drawing this sketch of a departed brother, I am not conscious of having, in the fondness of affection, overstepped the cool unbiassed judgment of a stranger. In truth, none could meet without admiring him, or know without loving him. His pupils looked up to him with mingled affection and respect. And his friends will, I fear, consider this tribute to his memory as a very inadequate compensation for the omission hitherto of all public notice of one who promised so well, and whose early death they have so deeply deplored.

The expectation of seeing the Life of Calvin completed, having been thus twice disappointed by the hand of death, the present writer must confess that he is still at a loss, whether to satisfy the curiosity of the public by printing his father's manuscript in the fragmentary shape in which it has been left by him, or to comply with the advice of his friends, who urge him to undertake the completion of the work. Anxious as he is to escape, honourably, from a task for which he feels himself so incompetent, he is willing to be regulated, in a great measure, by the decision of the public, who have now, after knowing the exact state in which the manuscript has been left, an opportunity of judging how far it would be proper to publish it as it stands.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### HIS PRIVATE CHARACTER.

IT may now be expected that this memoir should close with a summary estimate of the character of its subject. From this part of his task the author is anxious to escape, and would fain shelter himself, at the termination of his undertaking, under the plea of that nearness of relationship which ought, perhaps, to have deterred him from ever commencing it. He has failed, indeed, in the great object he proposed to himself, if he has not already presented the picture in such lights as may enable every reader to form an adequate conception of the leading features of the original. At the same time, there are certain domestic traits and miscellaneous illustrations of character, which could not be omitted without leaving the portrait unfinished; and to a brief delineation of which, as they could not well be introduced into the narrative of his life, this chapter may be devoted.

Every one who knew Dr. M'Crie must have been struck with the singular combination, in his character, of qualities seldom found so largely and harmoniously blended in the same individual. In his natural disposition, there was a deep-toned energy, and what, in the best sense, may be styled *passion*, united with a remarkable degree of self-control;—great caution with great courage—great deliberation with great decision—great indulgence and benevolence with great sternness and severity. Intense feeling was, no doubt, one of the standard features of his mind, combined with a temper constitutionally warm and even irritable; but so completely had this been triumphed over, and so firmly was it kept in check,

that to many who knew him superficially, the predominating trait may have appeared to be caution. He often spoke in high terms of the power which a man might gain over himself, in ruling his own spirit; and in this, I believe, he spoke from personal experience; for there can be little doubt that the trials and mortifications which he met with in early life, had been conscientiously improved by him for checking the exuberance of youthful zeal, and the excesses of natural temperament. Some qualities he possessed, which alone, or with other accompaniments, might have been shades to his character, but which, as they were found in him, rather gave effect to the light of the picture. A companion of his at college used to remark of him, that "M'Crie had too much pride to be vain." If he had any thing which could be called pride, it was of that sort which holds in high disdain every thing approaching to meanness, and it was tempered with such a lowly abasing estimate of himself, and such a condescending goodness towards others, as hardly to merit the odious appellation. "Faults he surely had," says one who spoke from early and intimate acquaintance: "We have known him long, and cannot say we ever discovered them, except in, or connected with, the excess of virtues, excessive disinterestedness—a faulty unselfishness—an inverted observation of himself and others—turning the diminishing glass on himself and the magnifying on others. He could feel keenly, but it was for the distresses of others; or if he was touched on his own account, it was in scorn of some imputed meanness, or implied want of confidence; if the warmth of indignant expression ever escaped from him, it was in defence of an injured friend, or of the insulted dignity of truth." It may be added, that if his own high-mindedness sometimes rated individuals or classes of men too low, he was oftener generous, and ever ready to seize on the first favourable symptom which could warrant him to alter his opinion.

In one of his letters, he says of himself, "When



required to speak or to write, I never in my life could speak or write well; and when I use strong language, it is either from the impulse of the moment, or under the impression of real or conceived opposition and resistance to what I say.”

While on this part of his character, I cannot avoid observing, that as he approached the close of his career, the kindness and gentleness of his heart predominated so far over the other qualities by which they had been formerly modified, as to cast them almost completely into the shade. The severer features of his character became gradually softened; until there remained the nearly unmingled aspect of brotherly charity, mildness, forbearance and tenderness, proclaiming his growing meetness for the better world.

Among the lesser traits by which he was distinguished in private life, he displayed no small degree of what has been termed moral courage. Had delicacy permitted, instances might have been mentioned, in which he manifested a contempt of danger, where persons of much stronger nerves have shrunk, and exposed his life to hazard, with a resolution which, in other circumstances, might have gained him the distinction of the hero. In connexion with this, was his remarkable fortitude in the endurance of pain, to which, in many of its shapes, he was frequently a martyr. As a curious instance of this, I may mention, that having hurt one of his feet with a tight boot, the surgeon recommended a small blister to be applied to the wounded part; he, however, extended the blister nearly over the whole foot, so as to subject himself to extreme agony; and on being asked why he had done so, he replied, that he had supposed it would be more effectual,—and as for the pain, he had felt curious to know *how much he could bear*.

Two other features of his private character, which may be said to have established him in the respect and affection which his other qualities inspired, were

his singular prudence and unaffected modesty. By the first of these qualifications, he was enabled, without the aid of craft or circumvention, and without sacrifice of principle, to steer his way, both in public and private life, and through the most trying circumstances, with a blamelessness seldom exemplified, and which, we truly believe, has not left him, if indeed he ever found, a single enemy upon earth. His modesty was no less conspicuous. In truth, he seemed to be as much concerned to escape from human applause, as other men are to gain it. In his efforts to do so, however, there was no semblance of affectation; it was his native temper, for which he himself took no credit, and to avoid the praise of which he would even sometimes do violence to his own feelings; exemplifying the beautiful picture which Leighton has drawn of humility: "He would not care to do some things on purpose that might seem arrogant, to carry humility unseen, that doth so naturally delight in covering all graces, and is sorry that it cannot do so without being seen itself." Nothing, indeed, struck a stranger more, on his first introduction to Dr. M'Cric, than the simplicity of his character—the total absence of all pretence—a quality which made the poorest member of his flock feel as much at ease in his society, as he made himself in that of the greatest of his visitors.

Of the higher elements which entered into the composition of his character, I must confess, though at the risk of exposing myself to the charge of extravagant and unbecoming eulogy, that I cannot refer the reader to a more faithful and striking exhibition, than that which he himself has given in the first two of his published Sermons, which describe the character of Paul. Into this elaborate, and, I venture to say, masterly picture of the large-minded and loving-hearted apostle of the Gentiles, he may be said, to use a common expression in a somewhat unusual sense, to have "thrown his whole soul:"—for, in tracing the leading features of that character, his

hand, guided by internal sympathy, has unconsciously, no doubt, and unintentionally, but most truly, drawn his own likeness. And when I mention "the discriminating features in the character of Paul," as drawn by the preacher, I have no doubt that many will at once recognise the similitude. He describes him as "distinguished for humility"—and for "disinterestedness;"—as "a man of an elevated and enlarged soul;"—as "eminent for intrepidity and independence"—"his courage being characterized by prudence," and "his independence not that of selfishness, pride, or affectation;"—"his heart was tender, and his affections warm;"—and "his ardent zeal for religion was tempered with the greatest moderation." Many of the reflections in these two discourses were the fruit of a varied and extensive course of reading on the subject of "True Greatness;" a fragment of a proposed essay on which, left among his manuscripts, is still more characteristic of the writer.

Without entering farther into general description, I shall merely add, that the genuine uprightness, and conscientious disinterestedness of his mind, which were abundantly proved by his public life, distinguished all his private transactions. Few men, perhaps, who have occupied so prominent a place in the public eye, have enjoyed, in the estimation of the world, and even of the enemies of religion, a more unsullied or unsuspected character. For the following anecdote I am indebted to Sir George Sinclair. This gentleman, while attending the classes of the University, happened to get into conversation with a medical student, a man of learning and talents, but thoroughly skeptical in his religious opinions. The infidel stoutly maintained that no clergyman, possessed of any mental powers or liberal acquirements, *really* believed in the truth of what he preached. Sir George mentioned several clergymen to whom, in his opinion, such a suspicion could never be attached. "Can you suppose," he asked, "that Dr. —— is not a sincere believer in the tenets which he preaches?"

“Oh, he is a man of the world; he cannot believe them.” “What say you to Dr. ——?” “He is too much of a scientific man to be a believer,” said the other, with a look of disdain. “Well then,” said Sir George, “Can you say that Dr. M'Crie does not believe in the truths which he delivers?” The countenance of the skeptic fell, and after a pause he replied, “You have the advantage of me now; I must grant you that Dr. M'Crie would *not* preach such doctrines, if he did not believe them.”

He carried the same spirit of superiority to all selfish and mercenary motives into his literary engagements. On this ground he refused many an application made to him by booksellers, who were anxious to employ his pen: nothing was more sure to defeat their object, than to commence their solicitations by an offer of *money*. On one occasion, in particular, Mr. Constable, who was eager to engage him in writing some short and popular lives of the Reformers for his Miscellany, waited upon him, and enlarging his offer to a *thousand guineas* for three volumes of no great size, he said, “I am going to Abbotsford to-morrow, and wish to have it to say to Sir Walter Scott that you have consented.” “Mr. Constable,” was the reply, “I should be sorry if you had it to say to Sir Walter, that a descendant of the old Covenanters could be bribed by money to do a thing he was not inclined to do.” And so they parted.

He was a professed hater of all literary *jobs*, in which light he regarded the greater part of those popular abridgments now so common. To abridgments, indeed, in all their shapes, and particularly those of an historical kind, he had an invincible repugnance, regarding them, it would seem, with Bacon, as “the corrupters and moths of history;”<sup>\*</sup> and

<sup>\*</sup> “Epitomes of history are the corrupters and moths, that have fretted and corroded many sound and excellent bodies of history, and reduced them to base and unprofitable dregs; whence all men of sound judgment declare, the use of them ought to be banished.”—*Bacon's Works*, vol. i. p. 51.

there was no subject on which he was more in danger of losing his temper. "You desire me," he writes to one of his correspondents, "to advise you as to the plan of an article for the Edinburgh Encyclopedia, to be entitled *Ecclesiastical History*. I would just as soon sit down and write the Lord's Prayer, or the Ten Commandments, or the Creed, within the circumference of a half-crown, or a shilling, or a sixpence—as write such an article within any bounds which an Encyclopedist would allot for it. The thing may be done, but *cui bono*? And why should precious time be wasted on it? The fact is, I am a declared enemy to Encyclopedias, and I cannot endure that any person should write for them, who possesses talents above those of a common copyist or abridger. They are popular with the present age (just as tracts, magazines, and reviews are,) because they give the superficial reader a smattering of every thing, without making him thoroughly acquainted with any thing. If a person should give himself the trouble of reading and thinking on any subject, should compress his materials into one-twentieth of the bounds which they filled, and should finish an original article, he will be mortified on seeing it environed with articles that have been clumsily abridged, or coolly copied from the most common authorities. Or if he be at the pains to turn up a collateral article, he will be grieved at finding the principles which he had established, and the facts which he had authenticated, contradicted by some loose and careless writer, who was only anxious to eke out his paper to entitle him to the £— per sheet. In short, I look upon them, as projected and engaged in by the greater part, in the light of money-jobs; and from such quarters I do not expect that either science or religion will be promoted. I would have learned men to labour in that field to which their genius and taste inclined them, free from bondage and unnatural restraint—to bring their productions to the public market—and, if they should fail, let them heroically starve and die on the

bed of literary glory—a garret. I have lectured our friend [Dr.] Thomson on this head, until, good-natured as you know he is, he has been inwardly angry.”

“Were I called upon,” says Dr. Watson, in a letter to the author, “to give a stranger an idea of your father, I should certainly think my likeness defective in an essential point, if I did not dwell upon the masculine strength of his character—the determination with which he adhered to his impressions of truth and convictions of duty—the sternness with which he could reprobate lax opinions or vicious practices—the serious air which bespoke him occupied with important thoughts and solemn prospects. But I should as certainly think my portrait a failure, or make it so, if I did not dwell to the full as much upon the mildness, benevolence, benignity, that marked his ordinary demeanour—his unpretending courtesy to strangers—his readiness to oblige, even when by doing so he exposed himself to trouble, loss of time, and what to some is still more costly, the communication of important materials—the result of laborious inquiries, and bearing upon objects connected with his own literary undertakings. Then his warm affectionate manner to his friends—his entire openness and dismissal of every thing like reserve, the instant that intercourse ripened into friendship—the easy unsuspecting confidence of his conversation with his intimates—the play of fancy—the lively humour—the wit of his fire-side talk—none of these should be forgotten.”

The following communication from another friend,\* who had frequent and familiar intercourse with him during the last years of his life, may afford the reader a peep into the study, and illustrate the general view which has been given of his private character:—

\* David D. Scott, Esq. This accomplished gentleman, now in England, was the author of a much admired notice of Dr. M'Crice, which appeared in the Edinburgh Courant, the day after his death.

“There were features in your father’s character which all could conceive, and most to a certain degree appreciate. Such was his simplicity, a quality that increases the difficulty of recalling his words, for he had not a particle of that affectation of being an original and powerful talker, which in Samuel Johnson led Cowper to pronounce him to be a coxcomb, and of which Robert Hall had apparently no small measure, derived perhaps from his respect for Johnson. Never was there a less flashy person than Dr. M’Crie—one who sought less to make a display by pointed expressions—paradoxical assertions—or antithetical prettinesses. And yet great native dignity of thought, and a well-cultivated taste kept him from marring the simplicity of his conversation by any thing slovenly or vulgar. His conscientiousness—his uprightness—the straightforward and resolute morality he displayed on all occasions—his loathing for duplicity of every kind and degree—his kindness to all, and the delicacy of his attentions to the poorest and the most despised—all these characteristics must surely have fixed themselves in the minds of the various members of his flock. But in other respects few could appreciate your father’s character as it deserved. People who consume their days in trifling occupations, and who think nothing of spending whole hours in meaningless gossip,—nay, persons far more greedy of a due employment of time, but of less reach of mind and depth of character, never can appreciate aright the disinterested patience with which he would hear out a long story from some prosy person, or walk far to see some poor body—or even, as I have known him do, go six miles out of town that he might communicate by word of mouth and with the greatest delicacy, some painful news to a servant maid, while every moment lost to him from his historical studies, foreign correspondence, and other matters to him intensely interesting, was dearly lost, and while in fact he was wearing out his pre-

scious life by stealing from sleep the time that he was to substitute for what was thus liberally given away, by his rare union of Christian principle and conscientious kindness.

“I need not say how often the suspense of the judgment, in weighing evidence, becomes habitual, and degenerates into skepticism and indifference. It appears to me, that towards the close of life particularly, your father had arrived at a very happy state of mind in this respect. True, he greatly offended some whom he thought at the time over timid in their views and practice. But on the whole he was a patient judge, both of opinions and of men; and yet I need not remind you how far this fairness was removed from indifference and skepticism. No virtues associated with what was false—no vices blended with what was good or true in men or in institutions, ever blurred to his mind the essential difference between truth and error,—virtue and vice. His faith must have been of the firmest kind. How many in the circumstances which ended in his deposition, would have been soured for life, and even have left the ministry altogether rather than be thrown into the dilemma of associating at the expense of his conscience, with men who were either deceivers or dupes, or of being isolated in the midst of society as he chose to be,—shunned even by all the evangelical ministers of Edinburgh, as a narrow-minded and obstinate bigot—a man who could bring his wife and family to poverty and contempt rather than abate one jot of his antiquated and metaphysical scruples. What a firm trust in the God of truth, and love of truth itself, must he have had, when the sneers of his brethren in the Church were re-echoed by the wits of the bar, and the judges on the bench,—the one seeing the same question, and its importance, involved in what appeared mere metaphysical subtleties, which the other viewed as a great practical principle which was in all time to affect the destinies of the British.



empire,—and what a singular rebuke those sneers have received from the greatest and most practical statesmen of the age!

“I was much struck with the mild judgment he would pass on men who differed from him, provided there was nothing double in their dealings, for duplicity seemed to stir his bile beyond measure. Never shall I forget the placid look with which he said one morning, ‘Well, there’s a man dead who took the trouble of coming eighty miles to depose me from the ministry. I am sure I have had no resentment towards him. No doubt he did what he considered it his duty to do. Yet it was hard with a wife and family to be thrown upon the world!’ He then entered on a most affecting account of his difficulties on that occasion. And ‘yet,’ said he, ‘after I had published the *Life of Knox*, Dugald Stewart did not think it beneath him to come up the long stair I lived at the head of, and to pay me a visit.’\* But I

\* The following anecdote rests on pretty good authority, and the latter part being certainly true, I am disposed to believe there must have been some foundation for the first, though some of the circumstances are not correctly stated:—“When the *Life of John Knox* was first published, as nothing was expected, *à priori*, from the work of a seceding clergyman, its great merit was not perceived for some time, especially by the literati. The way in which it first fell under the notice of the author’s illustrious contemporary, Professor Dugald Stewart, was very remarkable. The professor, one Sunday, being confined at home with illness, and all the family at church, except his man-servant, he had occasion to ring his bell, to call up this faithful old attendant. To his surprise, John did not make his appearance. Again he rung the bell; but still without effect. After ringing a third time, he thought it necessary to step down stairs, to see what could possibly be the occasion of John’s apparent negligence. On opening the door of the old man’s apartment, he found him sitting at a little table, his eyes bent attentively upon a book, and his whole soul apparently engrossed by what he was reading. It was only on being shaken by the shoulder that he rose from the trance of rapture in which he had been held by the book. Mr. Stewart was, of course, much surprised at the sudden turn which John’s mind seemed to have taken in favour of literature; and he had the curiosity to ask what book it was which had captivated him so wonderfully. ‘Why, sir,’ said John, ‘it’s a book that *my minister* has written, and really it’s a grand ane.’ The professor said he would take it up with him to his room, and

feel myself quite unable to go over these conversations. He seemed to recall such past incidents in his life, partly in acknowledgment of the goodness of Providence in carrying him through difficulties—partly to cheer me under disappointment and trial.

“In regard to public questions, I need hardly say, that during the period of my intercourse with your father, he seemed quite disconcerted at the confusion of opinions among parties bearing old names to which they had gradually ceased to have any proper claim. He venerated the name of Whig, because of its associations, and no less disliked that of Tory. And yet he too plainly saw that the one had acquired a new character with which he could have no sympathy in many points; and that the other was borne by not a few representatives of families who were formerly known as Whigs, with far less deviation from their ancestral Whig principles—in some cases, with no appreciable difference of that kind at all. In this confusion, however, of names and opinions, your father’s own course was not to be influenced by any party motives; and to him alone, more perhaps than to any other ten men in Scotland, we owe the formation of the party, now, I believe, called generally Church Whigs, whose distinct existence is of the most vital consequence to the continuation of our most valuable national traditions.

“In church affairs he was jealous, I thought to a fault, of ministers as a body. This feeling he was at no pains to conceal. The interest taken in the church courts by elders, seemed to gratify him, and great

try what he could make of it. He accordingly did so, and being once commenced, he found it fairly impossible to withdraw himself till he had completed the perusal of its whole contents. He next day waited upon Dr. M’Crie, to express the admiration he entertained for his performance; which he did in the highest possible terms. The author bowed to Mr. Stewart’s praises with the modesty of real genius, and replied by a compliment as exquisite as it was brief,—‘*Pulchrum est laudari a laudato,*’—It is delightful to be praised by one who has himself gained the praise of mankind.”

was his delight on learning that the practice of having family worship was reviving in the houses of so many of our country gentlemen. He had no dislike of a landed aristocracy, and considered even some of the amusements of that class, to which others might object, as not unbecoming,—in particular, hunting.

“He deplored a decay of that high conscientious feeling, which, he said, distinguished the divinity students of the Secession when he first joined them. No one dared at that time to allude, but in the most distant way, to the relative temporal advantages of different places where they might look to be settled. Such considerations, it was thought, were of too base a kind to endure being mentioned. But in a few years, said he, great was the change, and probationers might be heard balancing the pecuniary advantages of different calls with the utmost callousness.

“I trust some pains have been taken to preserve your father’s speeches, or parts of them. His character of the late Dr. Charles Stuart, deserves preservation as a piece of portrait-painting by the hand of a master. As an orator, your father held, in my opinion, a very high place. Whenever an effort was required, he was great. Witness his speech at the meeting in behalf of Greece, and his speech on Irish Education delivered in the Assembly Rooms. The time for preparation must have been short, but his whole soul was thrown into it. I had a curious proof of this, once that I called on the day preceding the deliverance of one of his public speeches. Not being aware of his being engaged in preparation for this, I expected to be received as usual, with his familiar welcome, and a request perhaps to make him a pen—an art in which his manuscripts will show that he was himself a sorry proficient. To my no small surprise, he gave me the stare of a man who had never seen me in his life before. He was pacing the small dimensions of his study with an air at once of abstraction and excitement, and stopped, point blank, as I entered, but only to give me this strange recep-

tion. Soon, however, he came forth, to my great regret, from 'the dome of thought—the palace of the soul' in which he had been preparing his speech, and gave me his usual hearty welcome—explaining what had occupied him. He took the interruption with perfect good humour; but, indeed, I suppose his good nature made him accustomed to such annoyances. To say that his eloquence was elaborate, I apprehend, is not in the least diminishing its merits. From ample stores he selected what was ever best, down to a minute precision of phraseology. And yet this studious attention to all the parts of his addresses was far from inconsistent with a hardihood at times that one would have expected rather from one of the Irish school. What more bold than the apostrophe in which, in the Irish Education speech, he contrasted public opinion with truth. 'Public opinion—'tis like the conceited coxcomb of the barn-yard, which struts along, and unfolds its tail, and looks as if it drew all the stars of heaven after it. But truth is like heaven's own bird, cleaving with noiseless wing its native element, gazing with unwincing eye on the solar ray, and regardless alike of the admiration of the spectators, and of the hiss and cackle of the inferior fowls that hail his departure!' I sat among the benches below with the well-known Mr. George Howe of Boston, N. E., by my side. I had taken him to the meeting, thinking he might be interested, but he was surprised and astonished—surprised to find so many ladies interested in a public question, which he said would never have brought them to any such meeting in the United States—and astonished at your father's eloquence."

To these memoranda, penned in all the warmth of the youthful admiration in which the writer held the subject of them, it would be easy to add others of a similar description. It might have been mentioned, that in literature, Dr. M'Cric was a great admirer of the Latin tongue. He gloried in the beauty of Calvin's Latinity; and in his latter days, entered, with

all the zest of a student of fifteen, into a competition with a young friend, in writing a translation of Calvin's celebrated inscription of his Institutes to Francis the First—his opponent having engaged to render it into old Saxon English, and he himself into his own style, from which, by the way, that excess of latinity in phraseology and rythm complained of in his earlier works, had by this time gradually worked itself off.\* A favourite book of frequent perusal with him was Justinian's Institutes—a mere nothing in point of bulk to the Opera Omnia of Cicero, which Calvin is said to have read through every year,—but remarkably illustrative of his mental habits—perpetually reasoning from, testing every thing by, and returning upon, first principles.

Though no poet himself, and never known to have written a verse, he had a great taste for poetry; and had read much more of it than may be supposed. It might surprise some to learn how intimate he was with some of the early French dramatists; whose works, however, he seems to have consulted chiefly for the sake of the *sentiment*, when in search of illus-

\* The reader, curious in such matters, may observe a marked resemblance between the style of Dr. McCrie, in his early writings particularly, and that of his much admired professor, Mr. Bruce. He had a style of his own, doubtless; but he was by no means tenacious in adhering to his phraseology. I recollect of Dr. Thomson meeting him on the street, after the publication of the Life of Melville, and after praising the work, saying, in his peculiar way, "But, man, you have spoiled one of your finest sentences by an odd-looking word which I never saw in my life before." "What is that?" "Death-stillness," said his friend. "What would you have said?" "O, 'death-like stillness,' or some other thing—but *death-stillness!*" "I prefer my own after all," said my father to me, after parting with the Doctor; but in the second edition it is altered to *death-like* (vol. i. p. 345.) In its original form the passage ran thus: "He is perfectly aware, that where all things are subjected to the arbitrary will of an individual, dissension and dissent are alike precluded. But he knows also that this is the harmony and peace which is to be found in the prison and the grave; and he would prefer the disunion and even uproar by which a deliberative assembly is sometimes shaken, to the appalling tranquillity and death-stillness which reign in the courts of despotism."—(Vol. ii., p. 20, 1st ed.)

trations for some favourite moral composition. He admired the genius of Byron—regarding him as decidedly the most original of our modern bards; but lamenting the immorality of his writings, which he dreaded even more than their undisguised infidelity.

It would occupy too much time to state his views of popular theological writers. His taste appears to have altered considerably towards the close of his life. Binning he admired beyond measure—placing him above even Howe and Baxter, in regard to the clearness of his views of the Gospel and the richness and beauty of his thoughts. Howe he thought too discursive and vague a writer to be safe for young minds. Of Owen's style he began to think less, though he still valued him as a theologian. Leighton and Flavel were especial favourites, and he would balance their merits thus:—"Leighton I can recommend to readers of every class—the most literate and refined, and the most illiterate; but Flavel I can better recommend to the very simple—he is so homely." Charnock, Bates, and Owen, he would denominate "the Princes of the Puritans." Bishops Hall and Hopkins stood high in his esteem, particularly the latter, whom he would earnestly recommend to students of divinity. We have already seen the high estimation in which he held the writings of Henry and Baxter. I never heard him recommend those of Jonathan Edwards. Practical works of the simplest order, such as Boston's *Fourfold State*, Matthew Henry's *Life of his father*, Ebenezer Erskine's *Sermons*, &c., he would warmly recommend his clerical friends to conjoin with systematic reading. The *Sermons of Robert Hall* he admired for their eloquence and ingenuity; those of Mr. Bradley of Clapham for their elegant simplicity.

He strongly inculcated on all his young friends, diligent and conscientious preparation for the pulpit. "Fix on your subject early in the week," he would say, "and ruminatè on it: let it *steep* in your mind,

and though, at first, few ideas may present themselves, it will gradually *swell* upon you." "If you borrow any thoughts from others," he would add, "take care, before giving them to the public as your own, to make them pass through your own mill." He had no patience with those who, under the pretext or fancy of possessing *genius*, contemned the ordinary aids of study and eschewed all mental labour. Indeed, he was inclined to advocate Buffon's theory, that genius is only a superior power of mental application;—always supposing, of course, the existence of some substratum of intellect; for some one having expressed his wonder, how a weak brother, who was very industrious in his preparations, could bring forth so little fruit, he replied, in the words which he has applied to James VI., "A thin soil, sir."

In church courts, the modesty and prudence of his character were very remarkably displayed. He uniformly declined taking a leading part in the discussions; in every point not involving public principle, he yielded to his brethren; and it was with great difficulty he could be prevailed upon to deliver his judgment in cases of importance, where they all looked up to him for advice.

In the discharge of his pastoral duties, he was regular and conscientious, to a degree which, considering the multiplicity of his other avocations, is truly astonishing. Endeared to every member of his flock, from the least to the greatest, by the patience, the kindness, and the condescension, with which he watched over them, and entered into all that concerned them (instances of which are embalmed in the recollection of many yet alive,) it is difficult to say whether he was more beloved by them in his private, or admired by them in his public character. Actuated by obvious love to the service of his Divine Master, he might have truly said in the beautiful lines of Doddridge,

"Hast thou a lamb, in all thy flock,  
I would disdain to feed?"

Hast thou a foe, before whose face  
I fear thy cause to plead?"

In the domestic circle, the beauty of his character appeared in a light, if possible, still more engaging. I shall not trust myself to speak of the manner in which he discharged every relative duty—of the indulgence, tempered rather than restrained by prudence,—the melting, and almost motherly, tenderness with which he acted the part of a father. And need I say that his domestic virtues were hallowed and commended, by a life of consistent and unblotted piety? His religion, like himself, was simple, unostentatious, unobtrusive. He seldom introduced devotional topics into general conversation; but while he sometimes regretted his diffidence in this respect, he was ever ready to administer his counsel to the heedless, or to mingle, upon fitting occasions, in confidential converse on divine things. In the pervading spirit of his remarks on professing Christians, there was a striking exhibition of the grace of charity—that touchstone of religious sincerity—especially in one of its loveliest features,—“Charity believeth all things, hopeth all things.” While careful not to express himself with bold assurance as to the blessedness of departed friends, he was still more cautious in uttering his doubts and fears about any. He seemed to feel here as if treading on forbidden ground, and shrunk from drawing aside the mysterious veil, which God, in sovereign wisdom, has interposed betwixt us and eternity. He delighted in cherishing the grace of Hope; and it was singular to observe the ingenuity with which, in the exercise of this amiable principle, he succeeded in chasing the gloom of grief and dependency from the breasts of others.

I feel anxious, however, to bring these Memoirs to a close, and shall do so by laying before my readers an extract from a letter written, after receiving the intelligence of his father's death, by that son, whose own untimely removal has been already recorded. The estimate of his father's character which



it contains, may be better received than any that I could give,—as coming from one who has since been laid in the same tomb with him over whom he poured forth this tribute of filial grief and admiration.

“VIENNA, 9th September 1835.

“MY DEAREST BROTHERS,—I used to think and speak of my two fathers, the one in heaven, and the other on earth. Thomas’s letter has informed me that both are now in heaven. This event, so unexpected by me, happened, it appears, on this wise: The great God loved my father very dearly—even as He had loved my mother also—and it seemed to Him that he had laboured and toiled enough on earth, and that it was high time he should retire to rest; so He called unto him that he should come up to heaven and live for ever in His presence and labour no more. And when my father heard the voice, he knew it and was content. So rising up quickly, he visited the churches in his religious connexion—preaching to them the kingdom of God, and exhorting them to continue steadfast in the faith. Then he went and abode one whole week with my sister, who had been sick, speaking to her of the decease he was about to accomplish, and strengthening her for what might come to pass. After this, he returned home and preached yet again to the lambs whom Jesus had told him to feed. And all things being now ready, he sat down and began to write unto *me*, that he might give me a bond from his hand, that as he loved me when I was with him, so he loved me unto the end. But God knew that the soul of this holy man was grieved beyond measure when he said, *Farewell*; ere therefore he had yet finished writing, or had taken leave of those around him, God caused a deep sleep to overshadow him, and when the sleep had cleared away, behold! he was not, for God had taken him.

“Now there is nothing painful, my dear brothers, in the contemplation of this gentle death; and yet

the sad tidings fell upon me heavily—more heavily than you could have expected. William's kind expedient for lessening the stroke, by causing it to descend gradually, was frustrated by the lateness of my arrival at Vienna: both letters came to hand at the same time—at a moment, too, when my spirits were more than usually buoyant. Fresh from a month's pleasant wandering through Tyrol—after two days' delightful dropping down the Danube in merry company—dressed as I was in my white travelling clothes, I hastened to the Post-Office through the gay streets of the gayest of cities. For a fortnight past my thoughts had spent some hours every day at Newington, and hardly a night had gone by without bringing my father's image to my dreams. I began to think I had found the secret of living at home in a foreign land. From the bottom of my heart I thanked the man who handed me two letters from dear Scotland, and hied me to the nearest coffee-room to feast my eyes, as I fondly imagined, with the glad tidings from those I loved. I hastily glanced over the first page of what my father had written. I could perceive that Jessie had been ill and was recovering; but the paleness of the ink and the bad light rendering the perusal difficult, I turned with impatience to Thomas' more legible writing. Suddenly a dim sense of some great calamity swam before my dazzled sight; I was eager to know the worst, but it was some time ere my staggering sight could discover what I had really lost. And when the cruel truth flashed on me—what would I then have given for solitude—for deliverance from those merry sounds and cheerful faces that seemed to mock my affliction, while they forbade its utterance!

“Oh! my father, my father! is it then true that our parting at Newington was so very serious? that the last pressure against thy manly breast, and thy warm lip, was never to be repeated on this side the grave? Are all the hopes—the inexpressible, long-nursed hopes—of again seeing thee, and talking with

thee, and making thee happy, are they all nothing, nothing now? Thou hast shown unto me the strength of a father's affection, why not wait till I had shown thee the extent of a son's gratitude? Why hast thou taken thy departure *now*, when our hearts had begun to lean against each other, and our pursuits had become one and the same. *Now*, when I had found the means of yet winning more of thy love, and fixing more exclusively thy regards? I had things to show thee altogether new, with which I meant to surprise thee, in order to enjoy the rich banquet of thy brightening eye. And the time was hard by when I should have sat by thy side, and let thee see how much I knew, and felt proud of thy praise—and oh! my father! I would have made all so easy unto thee, that even in the late sunset of thy days, thou couldst have wrought on and found no fatigue. But thy Master findeth that thou hast laboured enough, the heat of summer is past—the reaping is ended—now is the resting-time with its songs. Far up among the regions of the blest sparkles the intelligence of thy speaking eye, freed from the dimness of mortality, and powerful after the deepness of thy latter sleep; calmly radiates the light from thy placid countenance, while loud above the other chorists are heard at intervals the tones of thy happy voice, mellower now than formerly, when it loved to lead our morning and evening psalm. And all near thee on that hallowed spot stands one other saintly being, in fair radiance, meek and mild, humble but very holy, who has already learned all the songs of heaven, and can sing them sweetly, near whom thou delightest to linger, as in the presence of one once much loved and much loving.

“Bear with me, my dear brothers, while I briefly sketch what, at this moment, is present to my mind, of our dear departed parent. This portrait is not difficult to draw, for simplicity constituted at once the beauty and the strength of his character. Stern, uncompromising principle—a rare acuteness and per-

spicacity of intellect—and a patient aptitude to labour, these are the three qualities from which sprang the uniform uprightness of his public life, the wisdom and moral elevation of his pulpit discourses, the profound research, and accurate discrimination of his historical works. Those who had an opportunity of observing him more closely, could likewise discover in him a capacity for distant calculation, and a facility in unravelling the intricacies of a complicated case, which would have led him to eminence on the arena of political debate, or judicial investigation, but which were rarely brought into play during the quiet flow of his clerical career. His religious views received a colouring from his acquaintance with the ecclesiastical history of his country. Having discerned in the original constitution and discipline of the Kirk of Scotland—such as she is depicted in her ancient annals, and regulated by her own statute-books—the nearest approach to apostolic simplicity and purity, as well as the most successful attempt to secure the advantages of a national religious establishment, without sacrificing the inherent independence of the Church—he stood forth a worthy representative of the Scottish Covenanters, impressed with an exalted idea of the religious attainments of his forefathers, and earnestly contending for a return to their principles and institutions. With the view of recalling his native land to this ancient state of things, he attached himself, in his youth, to a small undistinguished body of Dissenters, who had the same object with himself at heart, and continued till death one of its unpretending but zealous members—undazzled by the rising celebrity of his name, unmoved by the defection of friends to a more popular cause, and unallured by the many avenues to worldly honour and emolument which were opened up to him. The greater part of his literary labours must be viewed in connexion with the main object of his life. As an historian, he ranks among those who have devoted their strength and time to the elucidation

tion of such periods of the past as had hitherto been unexplored. His subjects, therefore, are perfectly new, and tend to fill up important blanks in ecclesiastical history, which, but for his indefatigable industry, might long have remained unsupplied. To him the Church of Scotland is indebted for portraits of two of her most interesting men, and for a sketch of the most eventful period that has chequered her existence. His histories of the Reformation in Italy and Spain furnish the only knowledge which the English public possess of the rise and progress of Protestantism in those countries. Simple and moderate in their style, his writings command attention by the originality and importance of the matter they contain—by their nice appreciation of character and events—and by the high tone of religious and moral feeling that pervades them. Most of them have been translated into the languages of France and Germany, where his merits as an ecclesiastical historian have long been appreciated. His sermons were in general the affectionate and homely addresses of a revered pastor to his loving flock; occasionally they assumed a loftier character, and vied, in unction and pathos, with the best effusions of the old divines. In *lecturing* on an extended portion of Scripture, he rose far above most of his contemporary fellow-labourers; for his powers of historical representation were brought into action, and he was able, with wonderful wisdom and sagacity, with matured experience and an extended knowledge of human nature, to make the incidents of sacred history bear on the every-day events of the Christian's life. It was seldom that he could be prevailed on to take part in the public meetings of his fellow-citizens; but circumstances did now and then occur, powerful enough to draw him from his solitude. Then it was that his resources, rising with the greatness of the occasion, brought to light powers of mind and depth of feeling nearly allied to the highest eloquence. In the bosom of his congregation, he was cherished with that re-

verential love and fond gratitude which was the consequence and the reward of the paternal solicitude that watched over their spiritual progress, and of the firm gentleness that led them and fed them in this wilderness below. The open guilelessness of his manner, and the total absence of selfishness in all his actions, produced a mutual confidence and harmony, that flowed on without interruption during the whole long period of his ministrations. The first part of his public life was divided between his clerical duties and the intense study of the closet. In after years he abated the severity of the latter, and began to taste more freely the sweets of domestic endearment and social intercourse. It was in the hours of relaxation from labour that his friends discerned in him an affability and playful condescension, so uncommonly lively and winning, that the present afflictive stroke, in removing him from their circle, has laid their wounded hearts open to a thousand touching recollections which must dart upon them occasionally in after life. The native simplicity of his mind lent an ease and self-possession to his exterior which enabled him to move in the society of the great and polished without embarrassment—to mingle with the poor and uneducated, as if he had never known any thing higher or more refined. His delicacy in asking favours for himself or his family amounted to disease. He was one of the few popular authors of the day, who refused to enrich themselves by lending their names and their pens to the profitable speculations of scheming bookmakers. The equality of his disposition was great: praise did not seem to elate him, nor blame greatly to depress him. He was not subject to the weakness of anger. I have seen him hurt, grieved—never angry. He was never known to have *hated*; and therefore, though he had detractors, he died without having had an enemy.”

# APPENDIX.

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No. I.

PETITION TO THE GENERAL SYNOD,—APRIL 1800.

[Page 68.]

Unto the Reverend Moderator and Remanent Members of the General Associate Synod, to meet at Edinburgh, 22d April 1800, the Representation and Petition of the Subscriber;

*Humbly sheweth*,—That it is with extreme reluctance he comes forward to trouble the Synod at this time. He is very sensible of the difficulties which the Synod labour under, and the multiplicity of affairs which may engage their attention, and he would be very far from wishing to do any thing that might embarrass their proceedings, or involve them in greater confusion. It is after deliberate consideration, and under a conviction that the step he now takes is of importance, that he ventures to represent to the court certain things respecting the present state of the Testimony maintained by them, which are grieving to him.

In May 1796, the Synod passed an Act respecting the doctrine of the Confession of Faith, chap. xxiii., sect. 3, and chap. xx., sect. 4, and altered the Formula in agreeableness to this Act, to obviate the scruples which young men at license, preachers, and elders at ordination, and private persons at their accession and baptism of their children, have offered to the courts. The subscriber of this petition was one of those who entertained scruples upon this head, which were referred to the Synod by the Presbytery of Edinburgh, and the above mentioned Act so far satisfied his mind that he had freedom to take the formula as altered. Since that time, however, he has had opportunity of considering the Act more deliberately, of comparing it with the Confession of Faith, and of weighing more carefully the influence which the change introduced is calculated to have upon the whole of our principles: the consequence has been, that he has seen occasion to alter his sentiments which he formerly entertained respecting it, and to repent of the steps which he took.

Some may think, that in consideration of this scruple formerly entertained by the subscriber, and the occasion given by him to the change in the deed, he ought to have remained silent. In this manner he himself has hitherto thought and acted, and

willingly would he still have continued to do so, could he have reconciled such conduct with conscience and duty. This, however, he can no longer do, especially as the Act referred to is closely connected with deeds which the Synod have since passed, and may yet pass. If he has been instrumental, even in an indirect way, in bringing about a change which he looks upon as prejudicial to the interests of the religious body with whom he is connected, and the cause of truth among them, it is his duty to endeavour, as far as in his power, to repair the injury. Besides, he was previously, and still is, under solemn obligations which it is his duty to perform, and from which no act of his own, or others, can release him. He hopes, therefore, that his Reverend Fathers and Brethren will candidly interpret his conduct, and patiently listen to his difficulties.

By any opposition he may make to this Act, he would not be understood as standing in the way of a declaration against religious persecution. Our fathers in the Secession have done this long ago; and he thinks that the Synod had a call to explain themselves upon this head, considering the misrepresentation of their principles which had become so general. But this rendered it the more necessary, that what they said upon this subject should be cautious, and that they should give no countenance to those bold calumnies which had been thrown out, but never proved, against our principles.

The following are the reasons on account of which the subscriber thinks the Act objectionable:—

1. The Confession of Faith is condemned by it without any inquiry into the clauses objected against being instituted, and even without condescending upon these clauses. Great deliberation is necessary in rejecting or altering any part of principles received, and it should never be taken for granted that they are wrong. But this Act seems to have proceeded too much upon an opinion generally entertained among the members of Synod, but judicially taken for granted, while the clauses were not produced, examined and reasoned upon. Such procedure might have been unobjectionable, had the Act been wholly explanatory, and intended to remove false charges or misconstructions, or to explain what our former principles really were; but it is evident that the Act is partly condemnatory. In this case the subscriber is humbly of opinion, that no prejudice, however general, against the foresaid doctrine; no new opinion, however gradually introduced, or widely spread; no scruple entertained or expressed, either by ministers or people, were sufficient to warrant such a condemnation; though it might have been highly proper to take these into consideration, to have compared them with the Confession of Faith, and both with the Scriptures, and to have determined accordingly.

2. Although the Act professes in the preamble, that the Synod cannot at present enter on a particular consideration of the overture respecting the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion, and this gives reason to expect that no decision was given on the subject in controversy, yet it does materially decide upon it; at least it is so understood and explained by many; and thus, without due examination, introduces the new principle pro-



posed in the overture of a Testimony which is lying before the Synod. The meaning which many put upon the act is, that the allowing of any power to the magistrate about religious matters is an "investing of civil rulers with a lordship over the consciences, of men, and inconsistent with the spirituality, freedom and independence of the kingdom of Christ." If this be its meaning, then the Synod have suddenly adopted a principle never before received in any Protestant Church, nor by the Church in any age so far as the subscriber has hitherto seen, and which in his opinion would go a great way to condemn the manner in which the Reformation was carried on in most countries, and particularly in our own, and which would lead us to follow a divisive course from the Reformed and Covenanted Church of Scotland.

At any rate, the general and indeterminate declarations of the Act are very liable to be misconstrued, and therefore stand in need of a review.

3. The manner in which the Confession of Faith itself, and the declaration and defence of the Associate Presbytery's principles respecting the present civil government, are brought in opposition to the doctrine objected unto, seems calculated to render the Act more obscure, and to injure these parts of our principles. The Confession is introduced, declaring that "God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in any thing contrary to his Word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship; so that to believe such doctrine or obey such commandments, out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience, and reason also." These words contain a most certain and important truth, but the subscriber cannot perceive their applicableness to the subject of the Act. They are directed against the opinion of the Papists and others, who maintained that implicit obedience was due to the decisions of rulers ecclesiastical and civil. This is evident from these words in the same sentence, which are explanatory of the scope of the section, but which are left out in the Act,—*"And the requiring of an implicit faith and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience."* The quotation, in the disjointed state in which it appears, and in the sense in which it seems to be taken in the Act, bears equally against ecclesiastical as civil rulers, and it would make the power of the one, as well as that of the other, a lordship over the conscience. But the Confession of Faith, after having declared as above in favour of "true liberty of conscience" in opposition to an absolute and blind obedience," adds a little after in the same chapter,—*"And because the powers which God hath ordained and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another, they who upon pretence of Christian liberty, shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God. The question, then, comes to this, Has the Confession assigned an unlawful power or the unlawful exercise of it to the magistrate, in opposition to its preceding declaration respecting liberty of conscience? and in what instance has it done so?"*

As to the passage quoted from the Declaration and Defence, &c., at first view it may seem favourable to the opinion, that the magistrate has no power about religious matters; but when we consider that this interpretation is in direct opposition to the express declaration of the compilers of that paper, who in the very same paragraph assert that "there is nothing especially allotted and allowed unto magistrates by the Word of God and the Confessions of the Reformed Churches," this must show us that they never meant to convey such a sentiment; and upon a more particular examination it will be found that they do not contain this doctrine.

4. The Act was intended to be temporary, according to the intimation in the preamble, and therefore ought not to be continued as a standing rule. It has not been found sufficient for removing scruples, for in September 1799, the exception to the Confession was extended to "every thing in the Catechisms, or any of our public papers which, when taken by itself, seems to contain the doctrine objected against." In the mean time, members of Synod having their consciences aggrieved by the change in our public profession, are prevented from co-operating with their brethren in many important parts of public work, and thus a schism is made in the body.

On these and other accounts the subscriber humbly craves that the Synod would review this their Act, examine the passages in the Confession, &c., which are supposed to be objectionable, and give such a determination as shall tend most to the maintenance of truth, and the preservation of the unity of the body.—And that the presence of the Head of the Church may direct the Synod in this and all other matters, is the earnest prayer of

THO. M'CRIE.

[Owing to the unexpected size to which the volume has extended, it is not considered necessary to insert the Speech mentioned at p 69; especially as, besides what is given in the text, it contains little more than what is to be found in the above Petition.]

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## No. II.

ADDRESS DELIVERED TO THE CONGREGATION,—

JUNE 1806.

[Page 119.]

It is a proverbial saying, that it is a disgrace to a teacher when his own doctrine reproves him; and all those who are employed in teaching others, should be careful that their conduct be in some due measure consistent with what they inculcate upon their hearers; as without this they cannot expect that it will produce good effects upon their minds. Upon the same grounds it is the duty of such persons to give necessary explications as to any part of their conduct which, through ignorance and misapprehension, may have excited prejudices against them, and to wipe off mis-

representations which are injurious to their character, and may tend to mar the usefulness of their ministry. For such a step there are the best warrants in the word of God.

You will not therefore think it strange that I request your candid attention for a little, while I explain to you some parts of my conduct with reference to the proceedings of the General Synod, which have excited a considerable anxiety and been blamed by many. I doubt not that some have expected something of this kind at an earlier period, but although I was not insensible that very gross mistakes were entertained respecting my conduct in that affair, and that I was viewed by many as fostering division and exciting disturbance, yet I was averse to introduce the subject, and endeavoured to console myself with the testimony of my own conscience, and with the reflection, that persons more faithful than I could pretend to be had met with treatment of a similar kind. The time is, however, now come when silence would be sinful, and can no longer be kept. I do not mean, however, at present to enter upon a vindication of my principles upon the subjects of dispute, but shall only give you a statement of them, and of the reasons which have induced me, or rather impelled me, to take the steps I have taken. In doing this, I shall endeavour to speak with all due respect of the Synod, but at the same time with a freedom which becomes one who is conscious of having acted sincerely, and of the justice of the cause which he has espoused, which he cannot allow to depend upon any man, or number of men, however good or wise.

The first thing requisite in any controversy, is to know the matter in dispute. It is no uncommon thing for persons, upon hearing that a person has taken any particular step, immediately to pass judgment upon it, without waiting to hear the grounds and reasons upon which he proceeded; nothing, however, can be more unreasonable and unjust. Even a measure which, on a general view, appears to be harsh and strong, may, on a due consideration of the grounds, turn out to be not only justifiable, but laudable and necessary.

In our contentings with the Synod, I and the brethren with whom I have acted, have had it for our great and only object to maintain the principles received and hitherto avouched by the body. It has not been an opposition to mere modes of expression, it has not been an opposition to a new statement of the original principles, or an accommodation thereof to the present situation of the Church,—a work which we would be disposed to co-operate in as heartily as any; but we have opposed because we judge that, in the new exhibition of the profession of the Synod, there is a material departure from the former ground, which was settled agreeably to Scripture, and that doctrines are introduced or built upon, which are inconsistent with the Word of God and our former principles. If it cannot be shown that there is a real and palpable inconsistency between the old and new testimony and profession of Seceders in some important points, I, for one, will drop the controversy, and grant that the opposition I have made has been unreasonable and sinful.

The only method of determining this is by appealing to facts; and without indulging in general declamation and strong asser-

tions which may confound and mislead, but cannot convince a mind that seriously wishes satisfaction, I shall proceed to mention a few things that are necessary to a proper understanding of this affair. There is one thing that is necessary to be carried along in the whole of this question; it is, that the Secession Testimony was not only a testimony in behalf of the truths of God's Word, but of the reformation attained in this land, or, in other words, a testimony for the great work of God in bringing about a public reformation of religion in this kingdom. Now, when we speak of such a reformation, we not only mean a certain set of principles respecting religion and church order, as they may be laid down in certain standard books, but we must include also certain actings of a body of people in the way of removing evils and corruptions, and introducing what is lawful, good and scriptural, in their room. Accordingly in the original Testimony, witness is borne expressly to various laudable acts in promoting and advancing religion, all of which were considered, not merely as actings of men, but as the work of God, and as constituting the *reformation attained*—or the Covenanted Reformation.

In the testimony originally borne to this work of God, there were two leading heads under which the particulars were arranged. The first of these was the actings of the Church and its judicatories in promoting the Reformation of religion; the second was the actings of the nation, with its political rulers. The reformation of religion is there considered as a great national concern and duty, in the advancement of which both the civil and ecclesiastical rulers, each in their own sphere, together with the body of the people, were properly and laudably employed. Seceders did formerly bear witness, not only in behalf of the laws and actings of the ecclesiastical judicatories, but also in behalf of the actings of the civil powers on the same side, and of the laws which they made ratifying and establishing the true Protestant and Presbyterian religion. For example, they bear record, as one of the first instances of the "great work" which the hand of the "Lord" did "effectuate," that "the first Confession of Faith was ratified and approved by the Parliament" (Display i., 55;) not only that the "Book of Discipline was approved by the General Assembly, but that all the pieces of the Reformation then attained unto, were ratified and approved by the Parliament 1592." (P. 56.) As to the second Reformation, the original Testimony bears witness, that "During this period, the estates of the nation (or the Parliament) also gave their helping hand to the work of reformation, not only by the legal establishment given unto it in 1640, but also by approving the Solemn League, and by many laudable Acts passed anno 1649;" and after enumerating several of these, it adds, "The above particulars are some instances of the power and goodness of the Most High God, which this Presbytery judge it their duty to record and bear witness unto." (Pp. 61, 62.) A still more express testimony is borne unto these proceedings in the Declaration of the Associate Presbytery's principles respecting civil government, or Answers to Nairne. They there divide the Covenanted Reformation into two parts, which they call the "civil reformation" and the "ecclesiastical reformation." (Display i., 278.) The former comprehends, not

only the valuable liberties of the nation, but also the legal securities and ratifications given to the profession of the true religion. They particularly bear witness to the settlement of the deed of civil constitution upon a reformed footing in the years 1592 and 1649. They declare that the professed defence and maintenance of the true religion, &c., was secured by the fundamental constitution of the civil governments in our reforming periods; which deed, &c., is morally unalterable, &c. (P. 274.) In short, it is beyond a doubt, that in all the original papers in the Secession, where the covenanted reformation is spoken of and testified for, the civil settlement and laws in its favour, as well as the ecclesiastical, are included and approved; and when departures from it are condemned, the proceedings and laws of the State, as well as of the Church, are condemned.

Let us inquire now how the matter stands in the profession which the Synod have now adopted. A principle is introduced and avowed which excludes a nation and its civil rulers from interfering with religion. The New Testimony expressly asserts that the power competent to worldly kingdoms is to be viewed as "respecting only the secular interests of society" (New Testimony, p. 193,) the secular interests of society only, in distinction from their religious interests. It is easy to see that this principle not only tends to exclude nations and their rulers from all interference with religion, from employing their power for promoting a religious reformation and advancing the kingdom of Christ, but also virtually condemns what the rulers of this land did in former times of reformation, which the original Testimony did bear witness to as a work of God. Accordingly, this reformation is viewed all along through the new papers as a mere ecclesiastical reformation; and the laws made by a reforming Parliament, &c., in as far as they recognised, ratified, and established the reformed religion, are either omitted, glossed over or explained away. In the account of the First Reformation, the abolition of the laws in favour of Popery is mentioned, but a total and designed silence is observed respecting all the laws made in favour of the Protestant Confession and Discipline, by which the nation, in its most public capacity, stated itself on the side of Christ's cause, and even the famous deed of civil constitution, settled on a reformed footing in 1592, is buried and forgotten. The same thing is observable in the account of the Second Reformation. On one occasion it is said that the king "gave his consent to such acts as were thought necessary, for securing the civil and religious rights of the nation;" without saying whether this were right or wrong. But all the other laws of the reforming Parliaments during that period, which were specified and approved in the former papers of the Secession, and even the settlement of the civil constitution in 1649, which has formerly been considered as the crowning part of Scotland's Reformation and liberties, is passed over without mention or testimony. Even that wicked act of the Scottish Parliament after the Restoration of Charles II., by which all the laws establishing and ratifying the Presbyterian religion and covenants were rescinded, is passed over in its proper place in the acknowledgment of sins, and when it is mentioned, is condemned with a reserve; nor was this done inad-

vertently, for if the Presbyterian religion ought not to have been established by law, it is not easy to condemn a Parliament for rescinding that Establishment.

The question was once put, "The baptism of John—was it from heaven, or of men?" I ask, The conduct of this nation and its rulers, in recognising, setting forward, and establishing by laws the Protestant and Presbyterian religion—was it from heaven, or of men? Was it a work of God, or a mere human invention? This question cannot be evaded by any Seceder. We have seen that the original Testimony expressly recognised it as a great work of God, to be thankfully remembered and recorded; and it is matter of lamentation, that Seceders should now be unable or afraid to answer the question. But the work of the Lord is honourable, and shall be remembered.

Another point which has been in controversy, is the national obligation of the religious covenants entered into in this land. The doctrine of the new Testimony is, that "religious covenanting is entirely an ecclesiastical duty" (p. 162;) that persons enter into it "as members of the Church, and not as members of the State;" that "those invested with civil power have no other concern with it than as Church members" (pp. 152, 162;) and accordingly it restricts the obligation of the covenants of this land to persons of all ranks only in their spiritual character, and as Church members. But it cannot admit of a doubt, that the National and Solemn League and Covenant were national oaths, in the most proper sense of the word; that they were intended as such by those who framed them, and that they were entered into in this view by the three kingdoms; the civil rulers entering into them, enacting them, and setting them forward in their public capacity, as well as the ecclesiastical. And the uniform opinion of Presbyterians, from the time that they were taken, has been, that they are binding in a *national* as well as an *ecclesiastical* point of view. I shall only produce the testimony of one respectable writer (Principal Forrester:) "The binding force (says he) of these engagements appears in the subjects they affect, as, *first*, Our Church in her Representatives, and in their most public capacity, the General Assemblies in both nations; *second*, The State Representatives and Parliaments. Thus, all assurances are given that either civil or ecclesiastical laws can afford; and the public faith of Church and State is plighted with inviolable ties; so that they must stand while we have a Church or State in Scotland: both as men and as Christians, as members of the Church and State, under either a religious or civil consideration, we stand hereby inviolably engaged; and not only Representatives; but also the Incorporation (or body) of Church and State, are under the same." On this broad ground have Presbyterians stated the obligation of the Covenants of this land. And why should they not? Why should we seek to narrow their obligation? Are we afraid that these lands should be too closely bound to the Lord? If religious covenanting be a moral duty, if oaths and vows are founded in the light of nature as well as in the Word of God, why should not men be capable of entering into them, and of being bound by them in every character in which they are placed under the moral government of God, as men and

as Christians, as members of the Church and of the State, whenever there is a call to enter into such covenants as have a respect to all these characters, as was the case in the covenants of our ancestors, which Seceders have witnessed for and formally renewed? In the former testimony witness was expressly borne to the national obligation of these Covenants. In speaking of the National Covenant, it says, "By this solemn oath and covenant this *kingdom* made a *national* surrender of themselves unto the Lord." (Display, 56.) It declares that the Solemn League and Covenant was entered into, and binding upon the three kingdoms—that both of them are binding upon the church and lands, and the church and nations; the deed of civil constitution is said to have been settled in consequence of the most solemn covenant engagements, and the rescinding of the law in favour of the true religion is testified against as an act of national perjury. Yet by the new Testimony all are bound to declare, that religious covenanting is entirely an ecclesiastical duty, and binding only on the Church and her members as such; and that "those invested with civil power have no other concern with it but as Church members." Is it any wonder that there should be Seceders who cannot submit to receive such doctrine? The time will come, when it will be matter of astonishment that so few have appeared in such a cause, and that those who have appeared should be borne down, opposed, and spoken against. It is not a matter of small moment to restrict the obligation of solemn oaths, the breach of which is chargeable upon a land, or to explain away any part of that obligation. The quarrel of God's covenant is not yet thoroughly pleaded by him against these guilty and apostatizing lands, and all that have any due sense of the inviolable obligation of them, should tremble at touching or enervating them in the smallest point.

From this brief account I think it evidently appears, that there is a real and material difference between the old and new Testimony—a difference not only in form and words, but in principle; and particularly, that what was formerly expressly testified for as a work of God, is no longer considered as such, but dropt and buried, if not directly contradicted. That the Synod should have seen reason for altering or dropping some of the principles formerly adopted by them, is not so great a matter of astonishment. But that persons should be found, who have read and understood the two Testimonies, and who shall persevere in asserting that there is no difference in principle between the two—that the Synod have not dropt or departed from any part of their former Testimony, is truly astonishing. It would have been more consistent and candid to have avowed the alteration, to have pleaded that the former doctrine was untenable, and to give in reasons for the new. But the assertions of men upon this point, however often and strongly repeated, cannot produce conviction upon any mind that seriously seeks for truth. Every man must examine for himself, and as he shall answer to God. And, brethren, I do not wish you to receive the statement that I have now given upon my testimony. No man will regard much the temporary impression that is made upon the mind of an audience by a particular discourse. If they do not examine for themselves, the

impression will be erased by the very next discourse they hear on the other side. Hence so many Seceders are at present like "children tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine." But if persons once examine for themselves, they will obtain a knowledge of facts and fixed principles, which will enable them to detect the fallacy of vague declamation, and to distinguish between solid reasoning, and those good words and smooth speeches which impose upon the simple. You will find all that I have stated in the first volume of Mr. Gib's Display, which you can compare with the new Testimony of Synod.

In what I have said at present, I have confined myself almost entirely to the difference between the former profession of the Secession and that which is now made by the Synod, without entering into a vindication of the principles which are now opposed. I shall not, however, shun to do this, as I may have an opportunity in providence; for I am persuaded, that as they are founded on the Word of God and right reason, so the more a person examines the Scriptures without prejudice and prepossession, the more ready will he be to adopt them; and low as their credit is now sunk in the body, and few as are now disposed to appear for them, I entertain not the smallest doubt but that their credit will yet be revived not only in the Secession, but in a more general way. When the time to favour Zion is come, what have been esteemed her small and despised things will appear great things, and the stones which her sons shall gather out of her rubbish will appear precious stones.

"But why did you not state these things to the Synod? They can never understand what you wish. If you would only tell them what you wish they would grant it." I confess such things are said, but all that is said is not true. What have we been doing for these six or eight years back? What has been the purport of all the papers that we have given in to the Synod? We have told them that the proposition in the new Testimony, which confines the power of magistrates to secular interests only, and which excludes religion from their care, appears to us unscriptural and dangerous: they have defended it. We have told them that another proposition, that religious covenanting is entirely an ecclesiastical duty, appears to us inconsistent with Scripture, with the covenants of our ancestors, and the former Testimony: they have defended this also, and refused to expunge it. We have pointed out the defect in the new Testimony, in not witnessing, as formerly, for the civil reformation and settlement of religion: this they have declined to insert. What, then, can it serve to say that we will not tell them what we want, except to hold us out to odium as unreasonable men, who know not what they want, or who will not declare it.

"But you have not stated what your principles are respecting the power of the civil magistrate in religion. How far would you allow him to go?" Where was the need for our stating how far he should extend his power, when the Synod have denied that he has any power at all about this matter? Besides, we never saw any reason to trouble the Synod with difficult questions as to how far the magistrate might go in all circumstances. All that we wished was to maintain the Testimony which had been for-



merly exhibited in behalf of the civil reformation and settlements of religion in former periods which was fixed in consequence of solemn covenants which are still binding upon the land. So that all reports of our troubling the Synod with new opinions or disputed sentiments upon the subject are misrepresentations, flowing, I charitably hope, from ignorance, but for which we have not given the slightest grounds.

“But do you think that such a body as the Synod have really dissented from their former principles, and adopted principles that are unscriptural?” Certainly; if I did not think so I would be self-condemned for opposing their deeds as I have done. I might ask in turn, Is any Synod infallible? May not any council or Synod since the apostles’ days err? Has no such thing happened before? But when a people come to attach their faith so far to any body of men as to think it incredible that they should go wrong, or to hold up this as a sufficient answer to all evidence of the fact which is set before them, that people are under delusion, and there is no saying where they may be led.

“But, at any rate, the measures you have taken are high; and although the Synod have gone wrong in some things, yet this cannot warrant you to make a breach in the body.” I readily grant that there is a difference between the cause which we are maintaining, and the particular measures which we may have taken in its maintenance; and that many may approve of the former who may blame the latter. And while I have claimed a liberty to act for myself in this matter as light and conscience directed, I have not required that others should approve of this. At the same time, upon the most cool reflection, I see no reason to condemn myself for what I was led to do; and what is more, I am persuaded that impartial persons who attend to the circumstances in which we are placed, and to the views which we in conscience entertain, cannot condemn it. There is a wide difference between partial acts of Church government and discipline which may be grieving to a person, and acts which are intended for and converted into public terms of communion for the whole body. Acts of the former kind may be borne with, they are seldom acted upon; but those of the latter kind are the common bond of fellowship, and all are understood as either approving of or acquiescing in them. Hear the words of the introduction: “No person can be admitted to communion who does not express his approbation of all the doctrines in the Testimony itself;” and again, in the chapter on communion, it is stated, “those who oppose such truths cannot be consistently received into her communion.” Now, it is known that such are our views of the matter, that we consider ourselves as under an obligation to oppose several things in that Testimony, so that we are virtually and even by the letter of these deeds excluded from communion. It is true that in a note prefixed they have said that “the Synod will exercise all due tenderness,” &c. But we cannot consent to hold, by the tenure of indulgence, principles which we are convinced are founded upon the Word of God, which have been owned by all the Protestant Churches, which had an important place in the original Secession Testimony, and the credit of

which all Seceders, and particularly ministers, are solemnly bound to maintain.

The principles for which we have been called to contend, may appear to many disputable or trivial matters. They do not appear so to us. We view them as involving the glory of God, the honour of him whom his Father hath placed on his holy hill, the advancement of his public interest on earth, and the welfare of nations. We look upon religion as the common concern of all mankind, and that it is the duty of persons to promote and advance it in every station which they occupy. We consider that it is eminently the duty of those who are invested with civil authority to exercise a care about religion, and to make laws for countenancing its institutions. We are persuaded that if the principles now adopted by Seceders had been acted upon in former times in this country, the Reformation could never have taken place; and that Satan, after having found that his former scheme of persecuting religion can no longer succeed, is now endeavouring to persuade men that civil government and rulers have nothing to do with religion and the kingdom of Christ.

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### No. III.

#### CHARACTER OF DR. CHARLES STUART, OF DUNEARN.

[The substance of a speech delivered by Dr. M'Cric, at the Annual Meeting of the Society for the Support of Gaelic Schools, held within the Assembly Rooms, George Street, on Monday, 29th January 1827.]

[Page 173.]

WILL you, Sir, and this Assembly allow me, at this late hour, to detain them a very little, while I advert to the decease, since our last Annual Meeting, of an individual who held a distinguished office in this Society, to whom the objects of its benevolence are indebted in no common degree, and who may justly be called the parent of the Institution—Dr. Charles Stuart! It is well known to many, that the first idea of a distinct society for promoting the education of our countrymen in the Highlands and Islands, originated with Dr. Stuart; and that having imparted it, at an occasional interview, to a reverend gentleman—(also removed by death since we last met)—Dr. Hall, whose warmth of heart prompted him to encourage every benevolent scheme, steps were immediately taken for forming the Gaelic School Society, which, though rather unpopular at the commencement of its operations, has now united all suffrages in its favour, and been the means of doing extensive good. I know that there is a Providence which excites and presides over all human devices for good, and I trust that all who hear me are disposed to ascribe the origin and success of this Institution to a higher than “man that dieth;” but there is a subordinate attention and respect due

to those whom the Father of Lights is pleased to make instrumental in any of his beneficent designs; nor can it be wrong to honour those whom he hath honoured. The delicate task (for it is always delicate to touch the memory of the dead) of introducing here the name of the Society's departed friend, has, I suppose, been intrusted to me, because I was one of the first to whom he communicated the outlines of his plan, and who were induced by him to take part in its formation,—a circumstance, I must confess, not much to my credit; for after seeing the Society formed, I soon relapsed into my usual habits of retirement, and desisted from attendance on its committees, excusing myself with the reflection, that the management of its affairs was in the hands of better and abler Directors. Not so the individual who had been most active in founding the Society; he persevered in watching over its interests as long as his bodily health admitted of his attending; and continued to the last to take the liveliest interest in its prosperity.

Sir, it is a painful, but not an unprofitable exercise, to reflect at intervals on the individuals with whom we have been connected in the different circles of society to which we belong. And when we recall their names and their images, and look around us to find them, where—ah! where are they? Gone! Some of them, indeed, our seniors, who might be expected in the course of nature to go before us; but many of them our coevals, and not a few of them our juniors, who had outstripped us in the career of usefulness, as well as in the race of time. But whether they were younger or older, active or remiss, they are gone, and we are surrounded by others, who, if we remain so long as to suffer them to become acquainted with us, will soon find us a-missing also. It is in one point of view an humbling consideration to man, that he can produce works that will endure longer than himself; like the artist who constructs and sets in motion a machine which, with a little periodical winding up will perform its diurnal and monthly cycles, and continue to keep pace with time, after the maker's pulse has ceased to beat, and his frame fallen into disrepair and dissolution. The child, with his feeble finger, inserts in his father's garden a scion, and waters it with his little cruse; it grows to be a great tree; when he has fallen into decay, it has only attained its maturity, and will survive his children's children. Thus it is with the pigmy creators of this world. They die before the workmanship of their own hands,—before their works of wood, and clay, and rags, as well as of iron, and brass, and gold. The houses which we build are our sepulchral monuments; the trees which we plant, the yews which shall wave and weep over our graves. Are all the works of man, then, vanity, on which nothing is to be read but the lesson reiterated by the stones of a church-yard? No; he may be instrumental in producing what bears witness to his higher destiny—deeds of mercy and piety, in which he is a “worker together with God,” and by which, “though dead, he yet speaketh,” and labours after he has entered into his rest.

All the exertions of man may be said to be directed to two objects: to provide a remedy for his weakness, and an antidote against his mortality. For accomplishing both these ends, Soci-

city is the grand invention, if invention it may be called, which nature itself teaches. It forms not only a combination of powers, but a combination of lives. *Vis unita fortior* is not truer than *Vis unita diuturnior*. This is true eminently of that Society whose organization is from heaven, over whose preservation a special Providence watches, and against which the gates of hell shall never prevail; but it is true, in a lower sense, of voluntary societies for benevolent and religious purposes, which, so long as they do not erratically cross her orbit, may be viewed as satellites of this superior planet. Society dies not, though the members which compose it die daily. It is the true life-insurance, —the genuine Phœnix, possessing the power of reproduction,—a web which the wisdom of God, in nature and revelation, has taught men to weave round the beam of time, as some airy insects are said to weave theirs round the sunbeams. It is constantly losing and gaining, casting off and collecting, wasting and repairing, dying and reviving. In its progress, individuals are dropping off unperceived, without, in ordinary cases, affecting its operations, or requiring its motions to be for a moment suspended. But there are persons, at intervals, whose fall will be felt; and, though it do not cause a shock, will create a pause; and justify, if it do not call for, the stopping of the machinery for a very little, if it were but to look in and see that all is right, and to note the event for our own admonition. But I wander from the purpose.

Sir, I feel personally gratified in having to move that the death of Dr. Stuart shall be entered on the records of this Society. Of his character I shall say nothing, but what has fallen within my own observation. Owing to disparity of years, and other circumstances which need not to be mentioned here, I did not enjoy his friendship in the strictest sense of that word; but I had the honour and happiness of an intimate acquaintance with him during a considerable number of years, and flatter myself that I had some share of his confidence. I have spent many pleasant, and, I hope, not altogether useless hours in his company; and I am sure my memory does not deceive me when I say, that I do not recollect of a single unkind or unpleasant feeling being excited, during the period of our intercourse, though we have walked occasionally over debatable ground, and differed on points which neither of us regarded as trivial or unimportant. For, permit me to say, Sir, that it is no test of forbearance for persons to agree in differing about sentiments, which both or even one of them holds as of little or no moment, which he can quit with as much ease as he leaves furnished lodgings, and change as he would his dress, to go to a masquerade or a funeral. In Dr. Stuart, I always found the honourable feelings of the gentleman, the refined and liberal thinking of the scholar, and the unaffected and humble piety of the Christian. I would say more, but I am checked by the recollection, that the individual of whom I speak was a declared enemy to panegyric. I have heard him repeatedly mention it as a blot on meetings of this kind, that the speakers and the audience appeared to come together “to receive honour one of another.” I have signified my acquiescence in the justness of his remark; and were I even to seem to indulge in the

practice, I would feel conscious of a breach of confidence, and of really injuring while I professed to honour his memory. I beg leave, therefore, to move,—

“That the Members present do unanimously express their high respect for the memory and character of their late worthy Vice-President, Dr. Charles Stuart, of Dunearn.”

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#### No. IV.

### SPEECH AT A PUBLIC MEETING IN BEHALF OF THE GREEKS,—AUGUST 7, 1822.\*

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PERMIT me, Sir, before proceeding to the business which has convened us, to say a very few words by way of apology for myself for coming forward to address the meeting. When I state that, during the twenty-six years that I have resided in this city, the present is only the third time that I have ventured to address an assembly of the inhabitants called for any public purpose, I scarcely think that I run any great risk of being accused of a fondness for thrusting myself forward on such occasions. On the contrary, I am quite aware that my conduct has rather subjected me to the imputation of indifference or hostility to those benevolent undertakings and beneficent institutions which all good men approve of and desire to promote to the utmost of their ability. As I am giving a reason for my present conduct, not making an apology for my past, I shall merely say that, studious in my habits, and engaged in literary pursuits which I thought not altogether unprofitable, and which often could not be interrupted without being thrown back and disordered, I felt that I was not neglecting my duty, so long as I had the best grounds for believing that such benevolent measures were in no danger of failing for want of support, and that there were always at hand a sufficient number of individuals more qualified than I was for the task, ready to patronise them, and to take an active part in their defence and management. I reserved myself, therefore, for such cases in which, besides the importance and urgency of the object, there were certain circumstances arising out of the cause, or temporarily connected with its discussion, which might operate in deterring persons of benevolent minds from stepping forward to advocate it. And whenever such cases have occurred, and there was reason to fear that they would fail or be endangered for want of support, I have considered it as my imperious duty, if not to volunteer my services, at least to acquiesce in the requests of those who thought that my exertions could be in any degree useful.—Though the largeness and respectability of this meeting show that my fears have happily been exaggerated, yet

\* Taken from the report in the *Scotsman*, August 10, 1822, compared with the MS. notes of the speech in my possession.—*Editor.*

you will excuse me when I say, that I look on the present cause as one of this description; and that, impelled principally by this consideration, I have offered myself as a weak but willing advocate of that people, the tale of whose wrongs and sufferings has excited your sympathy and brought you together.

The diffidence which my inexperience must produce, and the embarrassment inseparable from it, are, I confess, considerably abated when I reflect on the greatness of the cause, and the call I have to appear in its behalf. Indeed I would condemn—I would be ashamed of myself—if, on such an occasion, after the flurry which a first appearance causes on nerves not very firmly strung, I should suffer bashfulness, or selfish sensibility, or timid apprehensions of my own incapacity, to discompose my mind, and prevent me from exerting any powers which I possess, however feeble, in the discharge of the task which is imposed on me. But in truth, Sir, the task which I have to perform is not a difficult one. What am I expected to do? Is it to excite your compassion and sympathy towards the suffering Greeks? Am I required to harrow up your feelings by reciting the heavy catalogue of Turkish barbarities—of whole districts laid waste and depopulated—the male inhabitants consigned to a cruel death, and the women and children torn away by ruffians? This has been already done—this sympathy has been already produced by the appalling and heart-rending facts which have come to your knowledge; and I am sure that all that can be wanted is, that the people of Edinburgh should be made acquainted with the most effectual way of conveying that relief which they are satisfied is required, and which it would gratify their best feelings to bestow. Is it expected that I should create an interest in your minds, by exciting those recollections, which are connected with the name of the people who are claiming our sympathy? It would be an insult to your understandings and hearts to suppose for a moment that this does not already exist; for what man that has a spark of patriotism in his breast, or that has any taste for liberal knowledge, does not feel himself concerned in every thing connected with the name and the fates of Greece? Although it should be supposed that through some strange fatality—some unaccountable concurrence of circumstances, this feeling had been blunted and become torpid, yet it would not require any vast powers, any preternatural charm to awaken it. Nothing more would be necessary for me, even in this case, than to lay before you my own feelings, and to point out to you the causes which first awakened and still keep them alive.

Sir, I was early initiated into the language of Greece, and taught to relish the beauties of its classical writers, and to admire the sublimities of sentiment which abound in their writings. Though maturer age, and the principles which I had also early derived from those Scriptures, which in my esteem are

“Above all Greek—above all Roman fame,”

though these have corrected my first impressions, yet they have not weakened their general force; and I am not ashamed to say, that the pronouncing of the name of Greece still occasions in me

a mixed emotion of veneration and delight; for it brings to my recollection the sayings and the exploits of her heroes, her sages, her freemen and patriots, by whom her name has been consecrated in history, and the splendour of whose genius and achievements has survived a bleak and barren waste of fourteen centuries. — You will not suspect me of egotism. I do not suppose that the feelings I have attempted to express are peculiar to myself, or that I feel them more strongly than others: I mean to speak the feelings of every genuine scholar. I have transferred, by a figure, what I have spoken from you to myself, lest there should be a single individual who has crept into this room, as if it were an unlawful conventicle, and who wishes to lay upon the altar of clarity the gift which conscience or compassion extorts from him, while he is ashamed of the name or lineage of that noble people whom he is honoured in relieving.

It is not necessary for me, Sir, in addressing you at this time, to dilate on the obligations under which modern literature lies to that of Greece, or to show how much of that knowledge, taste and refinement of which we boast has arisen from the perusal of her classics, whose writings have so long been the property of the nations of the west. I am under no necessity—I mean no temptation—in order to accomplish my present object, to under-rate the discoveries and improvements of modern times; but I can trace them all to the revival of literature in the fifteenth century, which opened to Europe the intellectual riches of Greece. Nay, more: for this revival we are mainly indebted to the agency and activity of the Greeks themselves—I mean the modern Greeks, whose character has been so lightly spoken of, but without whose aid their manuscripts would have been left to rot in monasteries, or employed in kindling the fires of an *auto-da-fe*. I cannot refrain here from saying, though it is a digression from the subject, that I have always felt hurt at the sneers of the elegant, though not always impartial, historian of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, when speaking of the modern Greeks; and the too evident pleasure with which he selects every fact and circumstance calculated to degrade their character at the time when they were subjugated by the Turks, even though he professes to do this by way of contrasting them with their ancestors. Through the medium of history, by which we are enabled to take a retrospective view through the long vista of many centuries, the light of literature and science which has since pervaded all Europe, is to be seen dawning feebly on the remote mountains of Calabria, and can be distinctly traced to Greece. It was then, in the early part of the fourteenth century, that the prince of modern lyric poets first met with a Greek monk, named Barlaam, who initiated him into the principles of his native language, at that time utterly unknown in Western Europe. It was in the same place that the contemporary and friend of Petrarch, the enlightened and witty Boccaccio, acquired a more perfect knowledge of the same language, and was furnished with the first translation of the poems of Homer, by a pupil of Barlaam, whose name has at present escaped me. They came for the purpose of supplicating the Western powers to resist the Turkish forces. They were unsuccessful in their applications, but their mission was produc-

tive of lasting benefit to the nations which they visited, and deserves to be held by their inhabitants in perpetual remembrance. Previous to that time, Western Europe was involved in thick darkness. Dante had indeed arisen; but his mighty genius blazed and burned within its own Inferno, and produced no other effect among his countrymen than that of making the darkness visible. From the time of Petrarch, the clouds continued to dissipate, and this effect was increased by means of successive exiles from Greece, who visited the courts of Italy, France, Germany, and Britain, creating, wherever they went, a thirst for their beautiful language; until at last, all the stores of Grecian literature, which escaped the barbarous hands of the Turks, were transferred to Italy, and from thence diffused through the neighbouring countries. It is to the Greeks that we are indebted for the principal remains of ancient literature, which, during the Gothic ages, had been locked up in Constantinople and other places in the East. The taking of Constantinople, and consequent dispersion of the Greek literati who had been sheltered there, have placed these treasures on the common table of Europe; thus we have become possessed of the sacred original of the Old Testament,—the venerable translation of it into the Greek language,—the original of the New Testament,—and the writings of the Christian Fathers, along with all the classic stores of Greece. When these were introduced into Western Europe, I think I hear the angel of Providence thus addressing the inhabitants:—"These will enable you to set up a barrier against the tumultuous, and till now irresistible tide of barbarian irruptions which have overwhelmed you; they will aid you in effecting your emancipation from the shackles of despotism which entwined themselves around both mind and body; and by these sacred pledges, whenever a happier star shall rise on Greece, sympathize with her, and exert yourself for her relief!"

I cannot here avoid expressing surprise and regret at the apathy which scholars and literati have displayed on this subject.—The mere scholar and literatus, indeed, often becomes the cautious and prudent politician. It would be easy to show that such persons have done comparatively little for the good of mankind, or for the direct advancement of any public cause which happened to be at stake in the day in which they lived. The spirit of literature and science is too weak and cold, in itself, to excite those who are actuated by it to any great, hazardous, or magnanimous deeds. Provided they are permitted peaceably to walk in their academic groves, tolerated in the free indulgence of their speculations and unrestrained in the expression of their discoveries, they are contented to allow human affairs to go on in their usual course, and to tolerate, in their turn, the grossest abuses. The spirit by which they are influenced more easily forms an alliance with this world, and there are many instances of their pursuing its profits, honours, and even pleasures, with as much greediness as those who never addicted themselves to the search of wisdom.

I do not mean to cast a summary and indiscriminate censure on all who have not attended this meeting. The best friends to a cause often entertain different opinions as to the most efficacious



means of promoting it. What I lament is the general indifference that has been testified on the subject, and the almost total silence of those whose opinions would have the greatest influence on the public mind. There was a time when Grecian literature was confined to a very small but trusty band, who were richly imbued with the spirit of Christian philanthropy—who did not sink the character of the man and the citizen in that of the scholar, but, who, having caught the enlightened, enlarged, and patriotic spirit which breathed in the writings with which they were conversant, and grafted it on the purer principles of Christianity, devoted themselves to the good of mankind, and were always ready to lift their voice, and even their arm should it be necessary, in the cause of humanity and of civil and religious liberty. These have passed away, and have given place to another race, whom I shall not characterize. There is, however, one encouragement left, and that not a small one. The treasures which Grecian literature contain are no longer the exclusive property of a particular *caste*; they have, by means of translations, been laid open to the world at large. The works of the celebrated bard (Homer,) whose residence has immortalized that island, which has lately been the theatre of Turkish licentiousness, together with the writings of the most illustrious of his countrymen, have long been in the possession of the British public, who admire their genius and imbibe their spirit. I will not be suspected of wishing to disparage the knowledge of the original language of these writers, or of denying its advantages for the perception of many of the nicer beauties of style and composition; but neither will I conceal that, in a good translation, the English reader possesses all in these writings that is grand in point of conception, and elevating in point of sentiment. All classes, in this respect, stand now upon something like a footing of equality. Though scholars and literati may stand aloof, yet others will come forward and fill up their places; and if they should attempt to excuse their conduct by exclaiming, "*Odi profanum vulgus et arceo*," I would only reply to the proud excuse in another Latin sentence, "*Surgunt indocti et rapiunt calum.*" A gentleman who has travelled through Greece, and is well acquainted with the manners of its inhabitants, will, I understand, address the meeting, and refute, to your satisfaction, the calumnies that have been circulated against the present race of Greeks. It has been said that they are degenerated, and certain acts of retaliation, which they are said to have committed on the Turks, has been referred to in proof of the assertion; but to show that, under the first impulses of indignation, it was possible for the bravest and the best to commit very unwarrantable acts, I would first advert to the treatment which the two heralds of Darius received from the Athenians and Lacedemonians, when they demanded earth and water from them as a mark of submission to their master. They flung one into a well and the other into a pit, and, with the vivacity peculiar to the Greeks, told them to take thence as much earth and water as they pleased! Yet this unjustifiable infraction of the laws of nations took place at a time when a Miltiades, a Themistocles, and he who had obtained from his countrymen the name of the Just, presided over the affairs

of Athens; it was committed by the men who achieved the memorable victories at Marathon and Salamis; and it was followed by the deed of that firm and fearless band, who, after raising their native Lacedæmon to the highest pinnacle of her glory, saved the liberties of all Greece, by blocking up with their dead bodies the Straits of Thermopylæ.

Those who embark in this cause may lay their account with misconstructions of their motives. This is unavoidable from the nature of the cause, and from the present state of public opinions and parties. From what has taken place on former occasions, it is not improbable that our activity will be imputed to political motives, and a restless or factious desire to patronise and encourage those who resist constituted authorities. There are general politics and party politics. General politics I understand to comprehend the good of mankind, and to form a branch of morality which grows out of religion. This is no question of party politics, nor do I propose that this meeting should take it up at all in a political light. I do not wish to conceal—I would do violence to the strongest feelings of my heart, if I did conceal—that I sympathize deeply in the struggle which the Greeks are now making to throw off the yoke of Ottoman despotism, and to regain their long-lost liberty and independence as a distinct people. Were that hero, to whom I have already alluded,—were Aristides now to rise from the grave, I could imagine him addressing the modern Greeks,—“O fallen! greatly fallen from the glorious character of your ancestors; but yet your attempt to throw off the yoke of ruthless despotism, redeems you in some measure from your degradation; and, if you are overcome, I would rather live in chains with you, than live free with the nations who look on your efforts with cold-blooded unconcern.”—It is my fervent wish, and devout prayer, that He who has revealed himself by the merciful name of the Friend of the oppressed, may look down from the height of his sanctuary in heaven, break the power of the oppressor, and set them free who are appointed to slavery and death. This, I am persuaded, would not only contribute to the temporal and spiritual prosperity of that people, but prove a blessing to Europe, and eventually to the millions who would yield an implicit subjection to the successors of Mahomet. But this is my individual aspiration, to which no other person present is pledged. We have not met to petition the Parliament, or his Majesty's Government, to interfere and decide this dreadful contest; though, if it had been thought advisable to address the king, during his presence in our city, respectfully imploring him to charge his representative at Constantinople, to protest against that barbarous conduct of the Turks, which had so lacerated the feelings of other nations—if such an address had been agreed upon, I should have seen no harm in that; and I think none of those distinguished persons by whom his Majesty will be surrounded when he arrives, would venture to step between the Throne and the People, to intercept such an avowal of their wishes, or to counteract its constitutional influence.—But it is not proposed to make any declaration in favour of the rational claims of the Greeks, or to assist them in their warlike efforts: all that is proposed is, to discharge a duty of charity to the necessitous, to perform a work of mercy to the wretched.

## No. V.

SPEECH AT THE SCOTTISH LADIES' SOCIETY FOR  
PROMOTING EDUCATION IN GREECE.

DELIVERED APRIL 9, 1825.

[Page 244.]

IN rising to address you at this time, I feel myself rather delicately placed, as I may be considered as taking the part which should have fallen this day to a gentleman of distinguished talents, with whose commanding eloquence you expected to have been delighted, and whose unavoidable absence I join with you in deeply regretting. It is, however, no small satisfaction to my mind, that by coming forward under these circumstances, I have an opportunity of giving a stronger pledge of good-will to the cause than I had anticipated. Happily, ladies and gentlemen, the task which has devolved on me is not in reality a difficult one. It is only necessary to name the object of this meeting, in order to secure a favourable, and even partial hearing. There is in the very name of Greece a charm which is felt by those who cannot explain the cause of their emotions; and this feeling has been greatly increased by the intensely interesting attitude which that country has lately assumed, and the dauntless resolution with which she maintains the struggle to vindicate her national independence, and regain her long-lost liberties. A difference of sentiment has obtained, even in Britain, respecting the attempts which have been made by other nations of late years, to throw off the yoke of slavery; but the Greeks have united the suffrages of all in their favour. Persons of all parties, of all sects, and of all modes of thinking, have joined in exclaiming with one voice, "Let Greece be free—let her be numbered again among the nations, and renew her former race of renown."—The object of this meeting, and the means by which it is proposed to carry it into execution, have been so luminously stated by the gentleman who so ably fills the chair, that I reckon it unnecessary to add a single word upon that part of the subject. The idea of this institution reflects the purest honour on the individuals with whom it originated, and adds, in my humble opinion, greatly to the character of our city for public spirit and enlightened philanthropy. Edinburgh, which used to be contented with the name of the *Gude Town*, has of late years been saluted with the flattering title of the *Modern Athens*. Without stopping to inquire if there has been a general acquiescence in the imposing of this title, or if it is likely that our city shall be known to posterity by it, I hope, Sir, that you will agree with me when I say, that she never presented a fairer and more attractive claim to this appellation than she does this day, when her daughters are assembled in such numbers to express their sympathy with the Greek nation, to pour the only salutary balm into the still bleeding wounds of that long oppressed people, and to help them to the means by

which they may gradually attain their former distinction in knowledge and refinement, and even surpass, in point of extent at least, any thing which Greece had reached when her illumination was at its meridian: for, Sir, however great my admiration of the august institutions and never-dying, though at present faded glories of that country, I must be allowed to say, that ancient Athens herself never presented a spectacle of the same interesting kind as this assembly, in which the flower of the female population of a great city is collected, in order that the expressed fragrance of its benevolent feeling may be wafted to a distant land; and all this done without sacrificing the smallest particle of that modesty and reserve which is characteristic of the sex. It is well known that the female character was depressed among all the nations of antiquity, the free as well as the enslaved, the civilized as well as the barbarous. In this respect, the freest of them was but half free, and the most civilized but half civilized. If you ask the cause of this, I reply—the exclusion of the better half from the means of acquiring knowledge. If you ask, again, what was the reason of this, I have to answer—the ignorance among heathen nations, and the oblivion, during the dark ages among Christian nations, of that original law of nature, republished by the author of Christianity—that God made the sexes one in the participation of his image, the first feature of which consists in knowledge. To assist in remedying this defect, is one main object of the proposed society. You must have observed, Sir, that when first announced, it was described as a society for educating females in Greece. On its being represented, however, that this restriction would cramp the operations of the Society, and narrow the sphere of its usefulness, the ladies who have taken an active part in calling this meeting, with a deference to advice, which is honourable to them, have agreed to include persons of both sexes among the objects of their benevolent scheme. At the same time they have not abandoned, and I do not wish that they should abandon, the idea of applying their resources chiefly to the instructing of females, so far as this may be found practical. I cannot help repeating what was said by one of them to myself, when urging the objection I had heard stated against the original limitation: “We are afraid lest, according to the maxims prevalent in that part of the world, all our funds be appropriated to the education of males, and our sex be passed over and left in that state of exclusion from knowledge to which they have so long been doomed.” Sir, I applaud the feeling which dictated this saying, and fondly do I hope and trust that, when the intelligence of the formation of this Society reaches Greece, it will awaken in the breasts of the females there, a desire to participate in that blessing which has exalted their sex here, and enabled them to conceive a plan of such enlightened generosity: and, moreover, that it will induce the men of Greece to lay aside their narrow and exclusive notions, and invite their partners and sisters to come and drink along with them at the common well-head of knowledge and of life. The most praiseworthy institutions, and the best concerted schemes, are obnoxious to censure, from those who may be inclined to start objections. One of these is, I suppose, couched under a

question proposed in reference to the formation of the Society:—“What know the ladies about Greek?” So then it seems that no person must be permitted to sympathize with a Greek, or to pay the tribute of a tear to the sufferings of a Greek, or to stretch out a hand to relieve a Greek, unless he can give an affirmative answer to this question—“Canst thou speak Greek?” Ah! unfortunate Greece! wretched indeed is thy condition, if thy only hope of relief depended upon those who can best speak thy language! Who are they? In the first rank are thy cruel and barbarous task-masters, the Turks, who, after having stripped thee of thy property, and subjected thee to the discipline of the bastinado, can salute thee in thy own native accents with the appellation of “*Christian dog!*” Next are thy good neighbours, and worthy defenders of thy faith, the Russians, who, after repeatedly instigating thy sons to take arms for the recovery of their liberties, have as often disowned all knowledge of the attempt, and denounced it as damnable rebellion. And lastly, and to bring up the rear, are the *litterati* of—Britain shall I say? who, although their fame is but the shadow of thy name, have not (with a very few exceptions) been known to have one sympathetic and kindred throb in thy cause, during the critical struggle in which thou hast been engaged!—Sir, it is one thing to be a Greek in the letter, and another thing to be a Greek in the spirit.—And as there are males who are instructed in the letter, and in all the elements of ancient Greek literature, who are nevertheless strangers to the true spirit which it breathes, so there may be females who are animated by the spirit, although they are incapable of reading its admired writings in the original, and may not know a single character of its alphabet. Let me, Sir, impart a secret to the ladies present! However enthusiastically we men, who take to ourselves the name of *learned*, may speak of the ravishment which we receive from reading the original languages, and though we may sometimes condescend to give you some idea of this, by repeating the very sounds of that deep-mouthed thunder which anciently fulminated over Greece, yet the sober truth is, Ladies, that by far the greater part of us never understand the Iliad and the Odyssey better, nor relish their beauties more, than when we hear them read by you from the pages of Pope or of Cowper. I do not wish to disparage (and I do not think I shall be suspected of disparaging) the study of the classics: it is useful for many purposes, besides that of unlocking the treasures of ancient knowledge. In particular, I rejoice to think that more attention has of late been paid to the Greek language in Scotland; but I would not purchase the reputation of being the first scholar in Europe, at the expense of fostering the false idea, that those who are ignorant of that language, are thereby necessarily excluded from perceiving and feeling the beauties of its writers, whether in prose or in poetry. But the objects which you propose by your Society are “impracticable and romantic.” That any person who listened to the statement from the Chair will pronounce them impracticable, I can scarcely believe. With respect to the charge of their being romantic, the Greeks are a romantic people, and the struggle which they have lately maintained is more than romantic. Why, Sir, we live in an age of romances. We have

often heard of the romantic situation of our city; and if it should have inspired our ladies with romantic ideas, the gentlemen who have talked so much on this topic may surely excuse them. We have got our streets and halls illuminated with romantic (or what would some time ago have been termed necromantic) lamps. We are wafted over the waters in romantic boats without either sail or oars; and we have the prospect of being conveyed over land in romantic carriages, without either driver or drawer.—But, seriously, can any person urge this objection, who knows what is doing, and has been done, in the cause of education? There are schools planned by British benevolence, and supported by British funds, which are at present established in the most distant and inhospitable parts of the globe—in the islands of the South Sea, in Australia, in Hindostan, on the glaciers of Iceland, on the ridges of the Caucasus, and in the wilds of Caffraria—“in the lions’ dens, and on the mountains of leopards!” And after this, shall it be scouted as a visionary and romantic undertaking, to establish similar institutions in the fair and inviting bosom of the Archipelago, which is comparatively at our door? Before I sit down, will the meeting permit me to say a single word on the present aspect of the general cause of Greece? (*Applause.*) I regard the Society, which we are met to form, as a scion sprung from the interest which the public has taken in that cause, and which is now to be grafted on the native stock of British female benevolence. That interest is no burst of transient enthusiasm.—It is deeply seated in the public mind. It is to this feeling, more than to the balancing of political interests, or to the jealousy with which nations may view the attempts of a rival already become too powerful, that I trust for the averting of the danger (dreaded by persons more politically wise than I pretend to be) to the nascent liberties of Modern Greece, from the ambitious projects of a certain northern Power. True it is, Sir, that that Power dismembered the ancient kingdom of Poland, and, retaining the body to itself, threw the mangled limbs to the Prussian eagle and the Austrian vulture. It delivered Norway into the hands of a republican renegade, and more lately it stood grinning delight over the murdered liberties of Naples and of Spain. These things it did, and the friends of freedom were silent. But let it venture to plant its foul paw on the sacred breast of Greece, and Liberty, who watches over that country for which she has now suffered the pangs of travail a second time, will utter a shriek more piercing than that which she gave when Kosciusko fell, which, reverberated from the breasts of every free man, and of every free woman, will astound the monster’s ear, and drive him appalled into his native fens.—Despair not of the cause of Greece. Despondency as to the issue of the present struggle would paralyze every exertion for promoting her internal improvement. To what purpose, it would be said, establish schools which must be swept away on the successful return of the barbarous invader, or which would be an object of deadly jealousy to a despotic usurper, whose dread of knowledge is in proportion to his hatred of liberty? But I have no fear on this head. I would not have any friend of this sacred cause to cherish the least doubt on that subject, or to talk of it in a doubtful strain. Let our language

be, "Greece *must* be free!" And, Sir, she *is* free.—The contest is already decided—the battle is o'er—the confused noise of the warrior is hushed—the daughters of Greece are gone forth to wash the blood-stained garments of their sons and brothers in the vale of Tempe and at the springs of Helicon. And they will welcome their sisters of Britain, who come to testify their sympathy with them, and to assist them in repairing the old wastes—the desolation of many generations.

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No. VI.

PETITION AGAINST THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CLAIMS.

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To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, in Parliament assembled, the humble Petition of the undersigned Inhabitants of Edinburgh;

*Showeth*,—That your Petitioners have recently seen, with surprise and deep concern, that a Bill is to be brought into Parliament, by his Majesty's Ministers, to repeal the Laws by which Roman Catholics are excluded from the Legislature, and from places of power in the Executive Government of these Realms.

That though the claims of the Roman Catholics have, for a considerable time past, been repeatedly brought forward, and made the subject of discussion in Parliament, your Petitioners, relying on the wise and enlightened resistance which has all along been made to them in both Houses, have hitherto remained silent; but now, when measures, having it for their object to concede these claims, are about to be proposed by persons who were, till lately, among their most strenuous opponents, and when there is reason to apprehend that they are to receive the united support of his Majesty's Ministers, your Petitioners feel themselves imperiously called upon to express their sentiments, lest their silence should be construed into acquiescence in a project replete with danger to the best interests of the country, civil and religious—to its Protestant institutions, and the Constitutional principles of its Monarchy.

That your Petitioners are warmly attached to freedom of conscience, and have no desire to monopolize it. They feel not the slightest wish to deprive Roman Catholics of the full liberty which they already enjoy of practising the rites of their worship, and conducting their private affairs, without molestation or disturbance; but while these are the opinions and feelings of your Petitioners, they are at the same time decidedly of opinion, that the genius and complex system of Popery, and the dominant and encroaching spirit of the Church of Rome, not only are contrary to the Word of God, and fraught with superstition and idolatry, but are such, in themselves, and in the unequivocal manifestations which have been so often given of their tendencies, as to

render it unsafe to intrust the adherents of that superstition with political power in this country; and, in particular, that their divided allegiance—their subjection to a foreign dominion, which has arrogated, exercised, and never renounced a universal authority, affecting, indirectly at least, the temporal and civil interests of men—their implicit devotion to a Church claiming infallibility and exclusive salvation—and the notorious subserviency which they are under to their spiritual guides, utterly incapacitate them for giving those securities which are requisite to a participation of Legislative and Executive power in a Protestant country, and under a Government like that of Britain.

That your Petitioners beg, humbly but earnestly, to remind your Honourable House of the sacrifices which it cost this country, before her Protestant Constitution could be established on a sure basis—of the struggles which their ancestors had to maintain against the pretensions and attempts, open and concealed, of the votaries of the church of Rome—and of the necessity under which they found themselves, of excluding Roman Catholics, first from the Houses of Parliament, and afterwards from the Throne.

That your Petitioners regard the proposed measure as inconsistent with the principles of the Revolution, in virtue of which the family of Brunswick was called to the Throne, and with the relations and corresponding engagements established between Sovereign and Subjects at that period; and your Petitioners are convinced that the contemplated change tends to the subversion of that settlement, inasmuch as the principles assumed, and the reasons urged, in vindication of the proposed repeal of the laws excluding Roman Catholics from Parliament, may be advanced and urged with equal or greater force in behalf of a measure for repealing the laws which prevent their succession to the Crown—and inasmuch as it will affect a most important alteration on the state of the Monarchy, and place the reigning Sovereign in a situation at once painful and perilous, by admitting to the other two branches of the Legislature, and to the Cabinet, persons whose principles are hostile to that Religion which he is bound to profess, and dangerous to those Establishments which he has sworn to support.

That your Petitioners cannot help being of opinion, that the honour, as well as the permanent peace of the country, has been compromised by the announcement of the proposed measure, on the part of his Majesty's Ministers, at a time when a Roman Catholic Association had placed itself in an attitude of intimidation—a blot which we are afraid has not been wiped off by the passing of a law for putting down that Association, *after* it had dissolved itself, under the idea that it had achieved the object of its formation.

That while your Petitioners are not indifferent to the agitation into which Ireland has lately been thrown, and the difficulties which the Government may experience in devising an effectual method of allaying the ferment, they must, at the same time, be of opinion, that both the danger and the difficulties have been exaggerated, and that, so far as they do exist, they exhibit, in a palpable manner, the evils to be dreaded from the measure in



contemplation; but at all events, your Petitioners cannot admit that considerations of expediency, and motives addressed to their fears, or even their love of peace, should outweigh or balance the sacred, indispensable, and paramount demands of public duty and permanent interests—of the duty which the Legislature owes to the People and to their own oaths, and the duty which the People owe to their God, to their earthly Sovereign, and to their posterity, whose temporal and eternal welfare are involved in preserving inviolate those securities which, by the kindness of Providence, they possess for professing a pure religion, and transmitting it, along with the blessings of a free Constitution, to posterity; and if any of the inhabitants of Ireland, shall be so infatuated, and so forgetful of the benefits they enjoy under a mild and tolerant Constitution, or if they shall suffer themselves to be so far misled, as to break out into acts of insubordination and rebellion, your Petitioners are confident that there is sufficient principle and courage in the nation to support the Government in repressing disorder and preserving tranquillity.

That your Petitioners farther rest their prayer on the solemn compact entered into and ratified by the Treaty of Union between Scotland and England, then independent kingdoms; and, as Scotsmen, they protest against the proposed repeal, as involving an infraction of the Act of the Scottish Parliament, regulating the Election of Peers and Commoners, which was declared by one of the Articles of Union, to be “as valid as if it were a part of, and engrossed in, the Treaty;” and also the Act of the same Parliament, for securing the Protestant Religion as then professed in Scotland,—which Act, with the establishment therein contained, was solemnly guaranteed to be “observed in all time coming, as a fundamental and essential condition of the said Treaty of Union, without any alteration thereof, or derogation thereto, in any sort, for ever.” Your Petitioners are most anxious to call the attention of Parliament to the terms of this Act, because, if it can ever enter into the contemplation of the Legislature to abrogate or annul, in any of its heads or clauses, a Statute which the Parliaments, both of England and of Scotland, declared to be unalterable, your Petitioners cannot conceive how the Nation can repose confidence in any securities which Acts of Parliament can provide for the permanence of the Protestant Constitution. The Act now referred to “doth establish and confirm the said true Protestant Religion, and the Worship, Discipline, and Government of this Church, to continue without any alteration to the people of this land, in all succeeding generations, in prosecution of the Declaration of the Estates of this Kingdom, containing the Claim of Right.” The same “Act for securing the Protestant Religion” provides, that all successors to the throne of Great Britain, shall, in all time coming, “Swear and subscribe, that they shall inviolably maintain and preserve the foresaid settlement of the true Protestant Religion, as above established by the laws of this Kingdom, in prosecution of the Claim of Right; and your Petitioners entreat your Honourable House to remember, that the first Article in the Declaration or Claim of Right, thus repeatedly recognised and re-enforced in the Treaty of Union, as well as in the oath of every sovereign of

Britain, at his or her accession to the throne, is expressed in these words:—"That, by the Law of this Kingdom, no Papist can be King or Queen of this Realm, nor bear any office whatsoever therein."

Your Petitioners, therefore, earnestly entreat your Honourable House not to consent to any measure which has for its object to admit Roman Catholics to Seats in Parliament, or to any offices beyond those which they at present hold; and your Petitioners shall ever pray, &c.

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## No. VII.

### CHARACTER OF THE LATE DR. THOMSON.

DURING the excitement caused by the sudden death of a public man, cut down in the prime of life, and in the middle of a career of extensive usefulness, it is easy to pronounce a panegyric, but difficult to delineate a character which shall be free from the exaggeration of existing feeling, and recommend itself to the unbiassed judgment of cool reflection. Rarely has such a deep sensation been produced as by the recent removal of Dr. Thomson; but in a few instances, we are persuaded, has there been less reason, on the ground of temporary excitation, for making abatements from the regret and lamentation so loudly and unequivocally expressed. He was so well known, his character and talents were so strongly marked, and so much of that description which all classes of men can appreciate, that the circumstances of his death did not create the interest, but only gave expression to that which already existed in the public mind.

Those who saw Dr. Thomson once, knew him; intimacy gave them a deeper insight into his character, but furnished no grounds for altering the opinion which they had at first been led to form. Simplicity, which is an essential element in all minds of superior mould, marked his appearance, his reasoning, his eloquence, and his whole conduct. All that he said or did was direct, straightforward, and unaffected; there was no labouring for effect, no paltering in a double sense. His talents were such as would have raised him to eminence in any profession or public walk of life which he might have chosen—a vigorous understanding, an active and ardent mind, with powers of close and persevering application. He made himself master, in a short time, of any subject to which he found it necessary to direct his attention—had all his knowledge at the most perfect command—expressed himself with the utmost perspicuity, ease, and energy—and, when roused by the greatness of his subject, or by the nature of the opposition which he encountered, his bold and masterly eloquence produced an effect, especially in a popular assembly, far beyond that which depends on the sallies of imagination, or the dazzling brilliancy of fancy-work. Nor was he less distinguished for his moral qualities, among which shone conspicuously an honest, firm, unflinching, fearless independence of mind, which prompted him uniformly to adopt and pursue that

course which his conscience told him was right, indifferent to personal consequences, and regardless of the frowns and threats of the powerful.

Besides the instructions of his worthy father, it was Dr. Thomson's felicity to enjoy the intimate friendship of the venerable Sir Henry Moncreiff, who early discovered his rising talents, and freely imparted to him the stores of his own vigorous and matured mind, and of an experience which he had acquired during the long period in which he was at the head of one of the parties in the National Church. Though Dr. Thomson was known as a popular and able preacher from the time he first entered on the ministry, the powers of his mind were not fully called forth and developed until his appointment to St. George's. He entered to that charge with a deep sense of the importance of the station, as one of the largest and genteelest parishes of the metropolis, and not without the knowledge that there was, in the minds of a part of those among whom he was called to labour, a prepossession against the peculiar doctrines which had always held a prominent place in his public ministrations. But he had not long occupied that pulpit, when, in spite of the delicate situation in which he was placed by more than one public event, which forced him to give a practical testimony in favour of the purity of the Presbyterian worship and the independence of the Church of Scotland, displeasing to many in high places, he disappointed those who had foreboded his ill success, and verified the expectations of such of his friends as had the greatest confidence in his talents. By the ability and eloquence of his discourses, by the assiduity and prudence of his more private ministrations, and by the affectionate solicitude which he evinced for the spiritual interests of those committed to his care, he not only dissipated every unfavourable impression, but seated himself so firmly in the hearts of his people, that, long before his lamented death, no clergyman in this city, established or dissenting, was more cordially revered and beloved by his congregation. Nothing endeared him to them so much and so deservedly as the attention he paid to the young and the sick; and of the happy art which he possessed of communicating instruction to the former, and administering advice and consolation to the latter, there are many pleasing, and, it is to be hoped, lasting memorials.

Dr. Thomson was decidedly evangelical in his doctrinal sentiments, which he did not disguise or hold back in his public discourses; but he was a practical preacher, and instead of indulging in abstruse speculations or philosophical disquisitions, made it his grand aim to impress the truths of the Gospel on the hearts of his hearers. Attached to the Church of Scotland from principle, not from convenience or accident, he made no pretensions to that indiscriminating and spurious liberty which puts all forms of ecclesiastical polity and communion on a level; but in his sentiments and feelings he was liberal in the truest sense of that word—could distinguish between a spirit of sectarianism and conscientious secession—never assumed the airs of a Churchman in his intercourse with Dissenters—co-operated with them in every good work, and cherished a respect for all faithful ministers,

which was founded not only on the principles of toleration and good-will, but on the conviction that their labours were useful in supplying the lack of service on the part of his own Church, and in counteracting those abuses in her administration, which he never scrupled, on any proper occasion, to confess and deplore.

It is well known that Dr. Thomson belonged to that party in the Church of Scotland which has defended the rights of the people in opposition to the rigorous enforcement of the law of patronage; and in advocating this cause in the Church Courts, he has for many years displayed his unrivalled talents as a public speaker, sustained by an intrepidity which was unawed by power, and a fortitude which was proof against overwhelming majorities. Of late years he has devoted a great portion of his labours to the defence of the pure circulation of the Scriptures, and to the emancipation of the degraded negroes in the West Indies; and in both causes he has displayed his characteristic ability, zeal for truth, and uncompromising and indignant reprobation of every species of dishonesty, injustice, and oppression. His exertions in behalf of the doctrines and standards of the Church, against some recent heresies and delusions, afford an additional proof, not only of his unwearied zeal in behalf of that sacred cause to which he devoted all his energies, but of his readiness, at all times, to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints."

Great as Dr. Thomson's popularity was (and few men in his sphere of life ever rose so high in popular favour,) he did not incur the wo denounced against those "of whom all men speak well." He had his detractors and enemies, who waited for his halting, and were prepared to magnify and blazon his faults. Of him it may be said, as of another Christian patriot, no man ever loved or hated him moderately. This was the inevitable consequence of his great talents, and the rough contests in which he was involved. His generous spirit raised him above envy and every jealous feeling, but it made him less tolerant of those who displayed these mean vices. When convinced of the justice of a cause, and satisfied of its magnitude, he threw his whole soul into it, summoned all his powers to its defence, and assailed its adversaries, not only with strong arguments, but with sharp, pointed, and sometimes poignant sarcasm; but unless he perceived insincerity or perverseness, his own feelings were too acute and just to permit him gratuitously to wound those of others. That his zeal was always reined by prudence—that his ardour of mind never hurried him to precipitate conclusions, or led him to magnify the subject in debate—that his mind was never warped by party feeling—and that he never indulged the love of victory, or sought to humble a teasing or pragmatic enemy—are positions which his true friends will not maintain. But his ablest opponents will admit, that in all the great questions in which he distinguished himself, he acted conscientiously—that he was an open, manly, and honourable adversary—and that, though he was sometimes unseasonably vehement, he was never disingenuous. Dr. Thomson was constitutionally a reformer; he felt a strong sympathy with those great men who, in a former age, won renown, by assailing the hydra of error, and

of civil and religious tyranny; and his character partook of theirs. In particular, he bore no inconsiderable resemblance to Luther, both in excellencies and defects; his leonine nobleness and potency, his masculine eloquence, his facetiousness and pleasantry, the fondness which he showed for the fascinating charms of music, and the irritability and vehemence which he occasionally displayed, to which some will add, the necessity which this imposed on him to make retractations, which, while they threw a partial shade over his fame, taught his admirers the needful lesson, that he was a man subject to like passions and infirmities with others. But the fact is, though hitherto known to few, and the time is now come for revealing it, that some of those effusions which were most objectionable, and exposed him to the greatest obloquy, were neither composed by Dr. Thomson, nor seen by him until they were published to the world; and that in one instance, which has been the cause of the most unsparing abuse, he paid the expenses of a prosecution, and submitted to make a public apology, for an offence of which he was innocent as the child unborn, rather than give up the name of the friend who was morally responsible for the deed,—an example of generous self-devotion which has few parallels.

To his other talents, Dr. Thomson added a singular capacity for business, which not only qualified him for taking an active part in Church Courts, but rendered him highly useful to those public charities of which the clergy of Edinburgh are officially managers, and to the different voluntary societies with which he was connected. This caused unceasing demands on his time and exertions, which, joined to his other labours, were sufficient to wear out the most robust constitution; and he at last sunk under their weight.

In private life, Dr. Thomson was every thing that is amiable and engaging. He was mild, and gentle, and cheerful—deeply tender and acutely sensitive in his strongest affections—most faithful and true in his attachment of friendship—kind-hearted and indulgent to all with whom he had intercourse. His firmness to principle, when he thought principle involved, whatsoever of the appearance of severity it may have presented to those who saw him only as a public character, had no taint of harshness in his private life; and, unbending as he certainly was in principle, he never failed to receive with kindness what was addressed to his reason in the spirit of friendship. It may, indeed, be said with truth, that great as were his public merits, and deplorable the public loss in his death, to those who had the happiness to live with him in habits of intimacy, the deepest and the bitterest feeling still is, the separation from a man who possessed so many of the finest and most amiable sensibilities of the human heart. In him the lion and the lamb may be said to have met together. But it was around his own family hearth, and in the circle of his intimate acquaintances, that Dr. Thomson was delightful. It was equally natural in him to play with a child, and to enter the lists with a practised polemic. He could be gay without levity, and grave without moroseness. His frank and bland manners, the equable flow of his cheerfulness and good humour, and the information which he possessed on almost every subject,

made his company to be courted by persons of all classes. He could mix with men of the world without compromising his principles, or lowering his character as a minister of the Gospel; and his presence was enough to repress any thing which had the semblance of irreligion.

The loss of such a man, and at such a time, is incalculable. His example and spirit had a wholesome and refreshing, an exhilarating and elevating, influence on the society in which he moved; and even the agitation which he produced, when he was in his stormy moods, was salutary, like the hurricane (his own favourite image, and the last which he employed in public,) purifying the moral atmosphere, and freeing it from the selfishness, and duplicity, and time-serving, with which it was overcharged.

Dr. Thomson was born in June 1778, and was ordained in the year 1802. He has left a widow and seven children, five of whom are daughters.

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## No. VIII.

### SPEECH AT THE MEETING ON EDUCATION IN IRELAND,—MAY 11, 1832.

FRIENDS AND FELLOW-CITIZENS,—I have to move a series of Resolutions, on which a Petition, afterwards to be read to you, is founded; and, before I say any thing farther, I wish to put you in possession of these Resolutions, by now reading them. (Here the Rev. gentleman read the Resolutions, and then proceeded.) After the spirit-stirring address which you have heard from our chairman,\* it would be improper in me to begin by protesting my unwillingness to come forward on the present occasion. My protestation is different. I feel myself just in the situation that I ought to occupy. I feel that I breathe a congenial atmosphere—am surrounded by persons of whose company, I trust, I shall never be ashamed—and am to attempt the performance of a duty which, how arduous soever, is in unison with my convictions and my feelings. I am not moved at the unpopularity of the measure I advocate. The truth is, that I have been accustomed all my life to be in a minority, or to belong to the opposition. Churchmen have looked askance upon me, because I was not a member of the Establishment, and dissenters have frowned on me because I was friendly to the Civil Establishment of religion. In political sentiment I have always been a Whig; and you all know that they were long in a minority,—a small, a discouraged, and discountenanced, almost a despairing minority. At their lowest ebb, I was with them; not that I ever interfered with their party politics, for I never attended a political meeting in my life, but my sentiments were known to have been formed in that school. The Whigs have now grown into strength, and been

\* George Ross, Esq.

raised to power, and still I am in the minority. I cannot say as the poet did of himself,—

“ Papist, or Protestant, or both between,  
Like good Erasmus in an honest mean;  
In moderation placing all my glory,  
While Tories call me Whig, and Whigs a Tory.”

Nor, on the other hand, can I charge myself with an over-fondness for singularity; but whether it is that my old friends have deserted me, or that I, in growing old, have lagged behind them, the fact is that I am still in the opposition. I merely allude to the fact as accounting for my comparative indifference to the unpopularity of our proceedings, and to the pompous array of names so ostentatiously displayed against us. TRUTH, my friends, *does not depend on numbers*. So long as she is surrounded by two or three, her banner shall be upheld and unfurled. Her votes are not numbered, but weighed. Her voice is seldom heard in the crowd, or amid the shouts of applause, raised by tip-staff prompters, and caught and re-echoed by the believing multitude, within or without hearing. Truth is not like the aristocratic coxcomb of the barn-yard, rearing her gaudy crest, spreading her gorgeous wings, and displaying her thousand moons with her satellites, as if she could, by her tail, draw after her a third part of the stars; but, like heaven's bird, she makes her noiseless way through her native element, to bathe her eyes in the solar beam, heedless alike of the gaze she attracts, and of the hissing and cackling of those who, far below, hail her departure. We live in times that try men's souls. The question now is, Principle or expediency?—the pleasing of God or the pleasing of men? and the demands of the latter are no less high and unbounded than those of the former. Their cry is, every thing or nothing. It matters not that you go with us 999 paces, provided you take not the 1000th. It is true you have supported us in all our measures; but if you dissent from us in this one, we will hold you as our declared foe, put you under our ban, and, throwing over you the wolf's skin, will hunt you down as an ultra-Tory, a placeman, a pensioner, a bigot, and in one word, a hypocrite. These are generally *ruses de guerre*, but they are bad as well as poor policy, because they are soon discovered, and because they kindle the indignation of men of honest and independent minds, who have an instinctive and irrepressible abhorrence of every thing that wears the semblance of intolerance, especially when it proceeds from the party to which they are otherwise attached. For my own part, had it not been for the manifestation of a spirit of this kind, I should not have been now addressing you. Having heard of the proposal to call this meeting, I made it my business to inquire into its objects, and was satisfied that the gentlemen with whom it originated were single-hearted in their aim, and had nothing else in view than what they professed. This I endeavoured to impress on the minds of such of their opponents as I had the opportunity of conversing with, but with little success. No sooner was the intention of meeting announced, than a cry was raised, the Tories are up, the bigots are moving, they are creeping out of their holes, they are going to meet in public; they will turn out the

ministry, and take out of the hands of the Peers the work of strangling the Reform Bill. (After adverting to the attempts which had been made to discredit the present meeting, and the proposals made for interrupting it, the Rev. Doctor continued.) Those who are opposed to us in opinion have called a meeting of their own, and they have as good a right to meet and express their sentiments as we have, but, I beg to add, no better. What was the reason for all these threats? Will you believe it,—we had called our meeting a *public meeting*. The fabulist tells us that a mountain laboured, and out came a ridiculous mouse; but then it was a public mouse,—it was no hole and corner mouse. If it had been so, the gentlemen would have stood aloof and laughed at it; and their friends of the press would have furnished their readers with a lithographed caricature of the poor animal gorged and distended by feeding on pensions and reversionary places. But it was a *public* mouse; and, therefore, it behoved to be hunted down; and for this purpose we must have a tournament and a tilting in an amphitheatre, where would be assembled a galaxy of all the rank and talent in our modern Athens, to which all the aspirants for honour, not excluding the literary knight-errant of the west, and the millenarian Dissenter as his second, might be invited. With due deference to the gentlemen of the long robe, who may have been consulted upon the legal import of a “public meeting,” I beg leave to state, that the people of this free country have the liberty to meet for any lawful specific purpose; and, (that nothing may be done in secret,) though they throw open their doors, that gives others no right to intrude and interrupt the business of those met in a house, the use of which they have purchased with their money, or obtained as a favour. It may be thought that I have dwelt too long on this point; but it never can be a trivial matter to resist encroachments upon the right of expressing public opinion, especially when made by a popular party in power. I have another reason for dwelling on this topic so particularly. The charge which I have been repelling has been introduced into the requisition for the meeting to be held on Monday, in favour of the Ministerial plan. It is there said that we “intend to convey to the legislature a fictitious expression of public opinion in Edinburgh.” In the *first* place, How did they come to know our intentions? *Secondly*, As to the legislature, it can only reach them as the petition of the individuals whose names are subscribed. And as to people of this city, are we not charged in the same advertisement with inviting those only who are friendly to a specific purpose? We all feel deeply interested in the fate of Ireland, not so much on the ground on which popular declaimers wax so eloquent,—that many of her sons filled the ranks of our army, and were led on to victory and death by the great Wellington,—but because they are our fellow-countrymen and fellow-subjects. Between their own clergy and the government they have been grievously ill used and kept in ignorance. We should do every thing in our power to extricate them from the situation in which they are, though it were to the plucking out of a right eye. We should do all for them that charity demands, all that a regard for the sacred interests of truth permits. There are some things we



cannot do for them. (After adverting to what had been done for promoting instruction in Ireland by different Societies, the Rev. Dr. said :) The Kildare Place Society I had always heard praised, until of late, that it has been carrying on a low huckster trade in printing books. Such an assertion might pass on the hustings of the western metropolis; it will not do in the modern Athens. It will not be repeated on Monday. My friend Professor Pillans will bear testimony to the excellence of the Kildare books. (Here the Doctor read an extract from a work of the Professor's.) I give his Majesty's Ministers every credit for their desire to promote education in Ireland; and while I blame their plan, I must state that the objectionable part of it did not originate with them, but was virtually entailed on them by their predecessors in office. My great objection to it is, that it proceeds upon, and recognises the Popish principle, that the Bible is an unsafe book, and not to be trusted in the hands of the laity, young or old; and, accordingly, a book of selections from it, containing such passages as may be read without danger, is to be substituted in its room as a school-book. In an advertisement of another meeting on this important subject, it is said "One of the school-books declared to be indispensable, is a selection from the Holy Scriptures, comprising such passages as are best adapted for the comprehension of children." Strange that such an assertion should have been hazarded after the candid, open, and manly statement of the Secretary for Ireland! After adverting to the rule of the Kildare Place Society, requiring the reading the Holy Scriptures without note or comment, Mr. Stanly goes on to say, "But it seems to have been overlooked, that the principles of the Roman Catholic Church (to which in any system intended for general diffusion throughout Ireland, the bulk of the pupils must necessarily belong) were totally at variance with this principle, and that the indiscriminate reading of the Holy Scriptures without note or comment, by children, must be peculiarly obnoxious to a Church which denies even to adults the right of unaided private interpretation of the sacred volume, with respect to articles of religious belief." To correct this vital defect, as Mr. Stanly calls it, was the object of the new model, and of the book of selections in particular. The right—the absolute, the indefeasible, the unalienable, the divine right—of all to read the Holy Scriptures, is the grand principle of the Reformation; it stands at the head of that protest which was solemnly taken in the sixteenth century, which has been subscribed by all reformers, and to which the Government of this country long ago affixed its Great Seal. It is not to be trifled with. In comparison with it, all the other points of contention between us and the Church of Rome are secondary and subordinate; if the foundations be undermined or unsettled, the whole superstructure of our faith falls to the ground. What must be the character of these selections, we are left at no loss to determine from the declared ground on which they are formed. They must exclude articles of religious belief. And what, I pray, is the Bible without articles of religious belief? It is no Bible. I do not object to selections from the Scripture when made with proper views, and on a sound principle. But I say that selections made by a Board of the description stated in the

letter of the Honourable Secretary for Ireland, and upon the principle of its constitution, must give an unfaithful representation, and convey a false idea of the design, and scope, and essential character of the Word of the living God. Think of the effect this must produce on the Roman Catholic priests—on the Roman Catholic youth—on the mind of the Protestant youth trained up under the proposed system. Think how it will check the desire so strongly expressed by many Roman Catholic parents, in spite of their priests, to have instruction in schools where the Bible is read; and the thousands of children now or lately employed in reading it in the Kildare schools, and in many others, will, *must*, be withdrawn from them, and sent to schools where it is removed from the public table; and these schools established by Government, and supported chiefly by money drawn from Protestant purses. I certainly can have no suspicion that His Majesty's Government has any intention of depriving the people of this country of the liberty of using the Scriptures; but I must say, *Obsta principiis*. Think of those master-spirits who, in an age of superstition, and themselves but lately released from its fascinating and soul-subduing spell, forced the temple of darkness, brought forth the casket in which the sacred volume was incarcerated, and amidst the execrations of interested priests, fearlessly opened it, while the multitude retired and stood aghast, as if Pandora's Box was to be opened a second time. And shall we do any thing which has the appearance of laying under restraint Heaven's best gift, which our fathers emancipated, or restamping on it that badge of slavery—the very vestige of which they were so careful to remove? (After answering some objections to Bible-reading in schools, the Doctor proceeded.) It has been said that the reverence for the Bible in Scotland has not been produced by its use in the schools, but acquired under the parental roof; but I ask, in reply, What planted that reverence under the parental roof? and by what means has the sacred fire been kept alive and spread? It has been said that the Bible is desecrated by being used as a school-book. So said the priests in the sixteenth century—that it was desecrated by coming into the hands of the vulgar. This is a desecration which the Bible glories in,—for out of the mouths of babes and sucklings has its Author's praise been perfected, and to them have its truths been revealed, while they were hid from the wise and prudent. I recur to the grand objection which I feel to the proposed plan of Government—that it proceeds upon, and recognises as its basis, the Popish principle, that the Bible is an unsafe book, and ought not to be put into the hands either of youth or adults, unless they have a priest at their elbow, to prevent them from being led into dangerous error by its ambiguity, or, in other words, to constitute him lord of their faith. To recognise this principle, or to give place to it even for an hour, is to renounce Protestantism; it is to yield up the liberty of the human mind; it is to plant the principle of slavery in the youthful breast; and any illumination that may be imparted by such a system of education would only serve to make the pupil a fitter tool for enslaving the minds of others. It is false, though a common opinion, that mere learning emancipates the mind. Were Pascal and Fenelon illiterate men? Govern-

ment should not have listened to the proposal of the Roman Catholic clergy. They should have told them—We are willing to do every thing to prevent the youth, belonging to your communion, from having any religious exercises imposed on them, which are repugnant to the sentiments of their natural guardians; and we shall take care that they shall not, on this ground, be excluded from the full benefit of secular instruction; but as rulers of a Protestant country, as the friends of mental liberty, and as living in the nineteenth century, we cannot consent to withdraw the Scriptures from the National schools; and we could not hold up our faces before our country in defence of such a plan. You lie already under sufficient odium as enemies to free inquiry; we beseech you, as you regard your own credit, and that of your church, to say no more on that head. But why need we wonder that his Majesty's ministers were misled in an unguarded and inauspicious hour, when their friends, after having leisure for reflection, should not only defend the principle, but hold it forth as the quintessence of wisdom and liberality? Hear what is said of it in the advertisement of the meeting of our fellow-citizen for Monday,—“A plan of education, pregnant with the greatest good to Ireland, closely approximating to the practice of Scotland, honourable to our patriotic ministry, and deeply founded on the principle of *liberty of conscience*—the glory of Protestants.” Save me from my friends, and I will defend myself from mine enemies! “*Liberty of conscience!*” Sacred name! How often hast thou been profaned! Thou hast been paltered with, bandied about, and tossed from one hand to another, until thou hast become any thing or nothing—*liberty of no-conscience* or *no liberty of conscience!* “*Glory of Protestants!*” to yield up the integrity of the Word of God, and to join with Papists in framing an *Index Expurgatorius!* Is not this very like “glorying in our shame?” O my country, my country! land of my fathers, whose soil, mixed, with the ashes, and moistened with the blood of martyrs, has reared institutions, which, like trees of righteousness, have shielded thy naked mountains from their own northern blasts, and produced all around an intellectual and a moral culture and fertility, in comparison of which, the fields of Greece and of Italy, in their highest and most boasted state of improvement, were a waste and howling wilderness,—shall I be ashamed of thee? No! But of thy degenerate and ungrateful sons, I am ashamed!

[From the Report of the Speech in the *Edinburgh Advertiser*, May 15, 1832.]

## No. IX.

SPEECH AT THE MEETING OF THE ANTI-PATRONAGE  
SOCIETY,—JANUARY 30, 1833.

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SIR.—I have come here as a volunteer, though not as a member of the Voluntary Church Association—and I cannot introduce myself better than seconding the motion which has just been made. With your leave, therefore, I shall address myself to the assembly. My friends—for on this occasion you will permit me to waive the more courteous phrase of Ladies and Gentlemen—I would with pleasure have moved thanks to your honourable Chairman at any meeting which he should attend, from the personal regard I feel for him, and the esteem in which I hold his public character and principles. But I am forcibly reminded by the transactions of this day, of that which commenced our acquaintance; and when I mention it, you will not think that I am entertaining you with private history, or forgetting the business for which you are met. It was a letter which he addressed to me several years ago, and in which, after adverting to the marked improvement of the National Church in point of evangelical doctrine, and to the harmony of views which existed between myself and another person for whom our love has since, by the sovereign disposal of Heaven, been converted into a holy and solemn regret (Dr. Thomson,) he proposed the serious question, Can nothing be done to bring into closer connexion the friends of religion in the Establishment and in the Secession? I answered the letter respectfully, and I trust, without any of the sour leaven of sectarian jealousy, but with the characteristic caution of a Scotsman,—taking due care not to pledge myself deeply; and, among other things, mentioning, that, in my opinion, no improvements which had taken place, and no arrangements which might be made, would heal the breach, so long as that yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear, remained on the neck of the Christian people of Scotland. Little did I then think that I should this day be standing on these boards, and moving thanks to my honourable friend for the manly, decided, and truly Christian part which he has acted on this important and soon-to-be absorbing question. His reply, bearing with the cold, if not repulsive air of my answer, led to an acquaintance which I, at least, have no ground to regret. There is no reason to fear that I shall offend your chairman by indulging in panegyric, for there is one of his Christian virtues which protects all the rest from any rude exposure—his Christian modesty. I shall only therefore express my conviction, that, if the Established Church of Scotland has, in these trying times, one stanch friend, and one who is willing to make sacrifices for her preservation and welfare, it is our honourable friend in the chair. I am sorry that we are deprived of the presence of

another honourable member elect of the Legislature, who was expected to attend, and who has already evinced his devotion to the cause which you are now met to promote. Had he been present, I would have saluted them as *par nobile fratrum*, and, with your concurrence, would have respectfully encouraged them to go forward, arm in arm, under that panoply of heavenly proof which is sufficient to cover them both, and all who may join them, in fighting the good fight, and quitting themselves as men for their people and their God.

And now, my friends, I have done what I proposed in rising. Shall I proceed, or stop short? Shall I advert to the merits of the question which has brought you together, or shall I sit down? I was not a member of the Church Patronage Society, and I am not yet a member of that which you this day instituted out of it. Whether I shall formally join it or not, is a matter of very small importance. But if I do not, it will be owing merely to prudential reasons, arising from my not being a member of the Establishment; certainly not at all from any doubt that I entertain of its lawfulness, or expediency, or urgency, or of the vast and every-day increasing importance of the measure which it proposes to effect. My decided opinion is, that a lay patron is as foreign to the Church of Christ, as a lord bishop is—that he has as little necessary connexion with an Established Church as a lord bishop has; and that the day is at hand when the idea of an Established Church depending on the patronage of any lord or landed proprietor whatever, will be scouted, and looked upon as equally antiquated and obsolete, as the once favourite court maxim, “No bishop, no King.” My decided opinion is, and has long been, that lay patronage is a usurpation upon the liberties of the Church (the freest kingdom and commonwealth on earth)—that it is a relic of fœdal times—that, so far as it has a show of foundation, it rests on the illegible shred of a vitiated contract, by which priests bartered away the rights of the people to serve their own secular purposes,—that, in the language of our Second Book of Discipline, “the names of patronages and benefices, together with the effect thereof, have flowed from the Pope and corruption of the canon law only,”—that it is a badge of slavery,—that it degrades the people into serfs, so far as regards ecclesiastical privileges, and mocks them with the name instead of the reality of a call,—that it unduly restrains Church Courts in the exercise of one of their most important duties—the fixing of the relation between a pastor and his congregation,—that it is calculated at once to mar the usefulness of a Christian ministry, and the edification of a Christian people,—and that a right which is openly put to sale, which may be bought by a sum of money, and in consequence of which, any infidel, or rake, or fool, has it in his power to force a pastor for life upon a reluctant and reclaiming people, is a disgrace to a free country, a foul blot on the character of Presbytery, and a public scandal to religion.

What is a patron? According to the ancient law of the Roman Republic, a patron was one who defended his clients from oppression, and pleaded their cause when accused. Do our lay patrons discharge any part of this duty? Do they ever look near

their clients, except to present their own man, and see that he, and no other, be inducted? If a mob attack the parish church, is the patron called in to quell it? If a refractory heritor, perhaps himself, refuse to pay his quota of stipend, is he prosecuted in the patron's name? If the incumbent neglect his duty, does the patron interfere to see that his clients are not defrauded? or, if they institute a process against their minister for error, or immorality, or non-residence, will the patron plead their cause before the proper court? Is there any thing he does which others do not, except depriving them of their Christian rights? Among the Romans, the clients chose their own patron; among us, the patron chooses for his clients. The truth is, that in the middle ages, when persons were continually exposed to hostile incursions from their neighbours—when ruthless barons and their barbarous followers had no regard to things sacred, but pillaged and burned down churches and chapels—when laws were unsettled, and the litigant parties appeared before a court of justice with their swords in their hands, and backed by their armed retainers,—churches stood in need of patrons, to defend them from oppression, and plead their cause. All persons and all properties had then their patrons; every village, every burgh, every corporation, every craft, up to that of King Crispin, had its patron, or rather patrons, and patronesses, corporeal and ghostly, in heaven, and on earth. But has not the necessity for all these things long ago ceased? Have not the things themselves been swept away in the course of the improvements which have been silently introduced by time, or by the laws which the Legislature has seen it proper to enact? Church patronage alone maintains its ground, as if to remind us that we were once barbarians and slaves; and that we may have remains, animal and organic, as well as fossil, of a former world, lay patrons must be seen floating on the tide which has swept away almost all abuses, *sicut rane in gurgite vasto*. If any ask, what can be the cause of this prodigy? I can only answer at present summarily, Indifference to religion; and if any one were to ask me for a palpable proof of the pernicious influence which patronage has exerted on the popular mind, I would appeal to the long endurance of it, and to the apathy which the people have shown about their best, their dearest, their most sacred rights, even at a time when they were struggling for rights of another kind, which, though highly valuable, are still inferior to these.

I know that there are some good men, for whom I have a great respect, who think that the evils of Church patronage may be modified, and that the attention of those who are friends to the Church should be directed to such amendments as would alleviate the grievances arising from intrusions, and provide for popular settlements, instead of seeking the repeal of existing laws. Some of them trust for this improvement to the restoration of calls to their due place, while others ground their confidence in a gradual amelioration in the views of patrons. To both these plans, I would say, in general, that they come too late, and that, whatever good they might have done formerly, there is no likelihood, from the present state of feeling, that they will be either acceptable or effective. As to the first, I would say, that it would

lead to endless collision between the callers and the patrons, the last of whom would generally prevail, because they would have it in their power to keep the parish vacant for an indefinite period, or else to force their presentee upon it; unless the call of the people were to be made the final act of choice, in which case patronage would be virtually, or rather *ipso facto*, abrogated. With respect to the latter mode, good men need to be reminded of the ancient maxim, "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called"—or, as some critics would render the words, "have been callers." Conversions are not every-day occurrences, and hitherto they have been rare among the rich and great. But granting that these millennial days had dawned, I ask, where is the Christian man, who, merely because the right of presentation had descended to him by inheritance, along with his lands, or because he had purchased the right to it with his money, would take it upon him to exercise the high responsibility of choosing one who was to watch for the souls of thousands of immortal beings? To consult with the parishioners, unless he intended to give them the right of election, or in other words, to yield up his right of presentation, would soon be found a dangerous and impolitic measure. But, perhaps, he would call in other counsellors; and what more natural than that he should regulate himself by the advice of the most able and influential ministers of the Church? That these Reverend Gentlemen are capable of estimating the talents of candidates better than either patrons or parishioners, I am not disposed to question, though there is room to doubt if they would be the best fitted for judging of the ministerial qualifications suited to a people of whose capacities they can have little knowledge, and with whose feelings they may have less sympathy. Besides, they might themselves have to sit in judgment, if not *in prima instantia*, yet in the court of last resort, on that very cause in which they had taken already an active part; and how could impartiality be expected from them? In fact, this specific for abating the evils of patronage would turn into a new species of the same genus. It is merely a converting of lay into clerical patronage. Irresponsible power has always been prolific of mischief, and not less so when lodged in the hands of churchmen than of others, especially if exercised in a secret way. The power of planting the churches would, in this way, fall into the hands of a few clergymen, say in Edinburgh and Glasgow, who would vote by a species of ballot, or send their *lettres de cachet* to the Home Secretary's office, or to that of the agent of some non-resident patron. Supposing that this practice should exert no deleterious influence on the minds of these individuals, and that it were not inconsistent with Presbyterian parity, would it not produce jealousies in the minds of their brethren, and in the end lead to heart-burnings, both on the part of probationers and parishioners?

But the grand objection to the whole of this scheme is, that it is founded on a disregard of the rights of the Christian people, and deprives them of the exercise of their due privileges. I am jealous of all modifications of the evil—of all attempts to gild or sweeten the pill. Disguise it as you will, still Patronage is a bitter draught; thousands have felt it to be so; and though it

may be sweetened to the taste of the mouth, it will prove, like the prophetic roll, bitter in the belly. If the Church of Scotland is doomed still to be oppressed, let it be by a tyrant without a vizor. I would say, in the words of a Presbyterian patriot, in the days of our learned monarch, when an attempt was made to introduce Episcopacy under the cover of giving the Church a representation in Parliament, "Busk, busk, busk him as bonnily as ye can, and fetch him in as fairly as ye will, we see him weel enough, we see the horns of his mitre." I ask, is not the Church of Christ a free society? Is not every congregation an integral part of that Church? And has not every free society a right to choose its own office-bearers?

Permit me to make a single remark on a position which has been advanced, bearing a relation to this subject. (The Rev. Dr. was understood to refer to Dr. Chalmers.) It has been said that the *beau ideal* of a provision for a nation's instruction in religion, is an Ecclesiastical Establishment, with a body of Dissenters. Now, if by this is meant merely an establishment which allows a liberty to persons to dissent from it, without their incurring thereby any civil pain or political disability, I cordially accede to it. But there is an abuse to which the statement is liable, by those who are averse to all change or improvement. When any complaint is made of any grievance which is felt, or any proposal of an amendment, it is met by not a few with the reply, "You have your remedy, you can dissent; no hardship is imposed upon you. Now, such an answer is good, neither in a religious nor in a political point of view,—not in a religious view, for every Christian has a right, by the laws of Christ, to the communion of the Church, and no set of rulers is allowed to exclude at its pleasure, but is bound to take into consideration, and to redress all reasonable complaints, and to remove every thing that is really a bar to a more extensive scriptural fellowship,—not in a political view, for the establishment is erected for the benefit of the nation at large, and intended to be a national blessing. It is a hardship to be obliged to dissent. Dissent may increase to such a degree as to become burdensome to the nation; and if the Established Church shall lend herself to this, by refusing to correct abuses, or neglecting to make such changes as are consistent with her constitution, and which, instead of weakening, will strengthen her constitution, she is not only morally responsible for the consequences, but may depend upon being, in process of time, made fatally responsible, by incurring a deprivation of her peculiar privileges.

The proposition on which I am remarking seems to proceed on the analogous principle of an opposition in Parliament, or a rivalry in commercial speculation, and views Dissenters merely as a spur to the Established Clergy, by stimulating them to greater vigilance and diligence. But it does not sufficiently attend to the hostile feelings engendered by the Establishment being the favoured party, and enjoying, though not a monopoly, yet a protecting and encouraging bounty. Were Dissenterism to revolve round the Establishment like a satellite, or keep always at a respectful but moderate distance, all would go on well, according to this theory of the heavenly bodies. But if,



instead of this, it fly off to a greater distance in space, its influence is lost, and the presiding or parent planet will reel and lose its equilibrium. Agreeably to the law of projectiles, a body put in motion has a continual tendency to recede from the centre, unless in so far as it is counteracted by the power of attraction. On leaving, or being ejected from the Establishment, a body of Christians moves in the line of a centrifugal force; and, if not restrained and held back by the centripetal, must every hour remove to a greater distance from it. Hence, it becomes the duty and the interest of an Established Church to present as extensive a surface of attraction as possible, and carefully to remove every thing that contributes to lessen its influence. A few individuals who are attached to its radical principles, and who cherish the hope that the abuses which drove them from its communion will be reformed, may continue for a considerable time to move in the circle which they at first described, and to stand in the same relation to her in which they placed themselves at the separation. But the principles of human nature and experience warrant the conclusion, that by far the greater part will gradually recede, until they reach the point of direct opposition. A striking illustration of this remark is at hand. It is just a hundred years since a Secession from the Established Church of Scotland took place, caused by the enforcement of the law of Patronage. The first Seceders were friendly, not only to the standards of the Church of Scotland, but to her Establishment by law. This they avowed to the world, and they confirmed it in the most solemn manner, for they were honest and sincere in the avowal. They continued for a considerable time to adhere to these principles; but at last they wearied of holding them, and now the leading persons among them have entered into a league (I cannot call it a Solemn League) with Independents and other sects, in an open and avowed attempt to overthrow all Ecclesiastical Establishments. Far am I from justifying them in this step; but neither can I apply the flattering unction, and say, that all the fault is with the one party, and that the other is guiltless. The proportions of blame, I do not meddle with; that must be left to a higher and impartial hand. "*Verbum sat sapientibus.*" I speak to wise men; judge ye what I say.

The course, Sir, which you have adopted this day is the true one, in resolving to strike at the root of the evil, and to petition the Legislature for the total abolition of Patronage. It is called for by the nature of the grievance, and the character of the times, which at once urge the necessity of the measure, and hold forth a reasonable prospect of success. When I came here to-day, I was prepared to see a small assembly, smaller than that which I now address; but when I reflect upon the importance of the object, and all the concurring circumstances which conspire to give it interest, I cannot refrain from expressing my astonishment and grief, that so few have appeared in its support. I am told, that the nature and specific object of your meeting have not been sufficiently made known to the public. This may be the case; but still they would have been discovered either in the body, or at the foot of even a long advertisement, had there not

been a culpable apathy to the cause. It was said of old, in a critical period of Israel's history, "Out of Machir came down governors, and out of Zabulon they that handle the pen of the writer." But where are our governors? Where are our learned scribes and eloquent orators? Where are our political reformers? And where, O! where, are our popular clergy? Have our Whigs forgotten whence they derived their name? or do they need to be told that Patronage was reimposed upon the Church of Scotland by a Tory Ministry, with the view of preparing the way for the restoration of political despotism? Have our popular clergy forgotten what gave them their popularity? or has the fear of change so perplexed their minds, as to make them fall into the arms of moderation, and to subscribe the creed, "Whatever is, is right?" It was the more necessary that they should have come forward, as they know that Dissenters do not now take that interest in the subject which they once manifested, and that so many of them now wish Patronage to hang as a millstone about the neck of the Establishment. But I am not discouraged as to your prospects. I feel no shame at the smallness of your numbers. Those who have prepared for this meeting, have shown their discretion in selecting the place; but for my part I could have wished that we had met in the larger room, and that the empty benches, and thinly-planted platform, should have been recorded by the person sitting before me, and proclaimed in all the newspapers, to make your friends, both political and religious, ashamed of their slackness, and to provoke them to jealousy. Your Chairman has been pleased, in his kindness to me, to express a hope of seeing me one day in a certain situation: but I can assure you that I feel more honoured, in addressing this select meeting, than I should feel, were I introduced into the General Assembly, and placed in the seat before his Majesty's Commissioner.

These being my sentiments and feelings, you may perhaps ask me, "Why do you not formally adjoin yourself to the Society?" I might answer, I am already a member of an Anti-Patronage Society; I have been six-and-thirty years an office-bearer of an Anti-Patronage Society, which has subsisted now for a long century. This, in the opinion of some, may detract from the value of the approbation I have given to your association; but I think I can give a convincing proof to the contrary. Sir, if you succeed in your object, you will do me much harm—you will thin, much thin, my congregation. For I must say (and the attention with which you have listened to me, demands the frank avowal,) that though Patronage were abolished to-morrow, I could not forthwith enter into the Establishment. But I am not so blind, or so ignorant of the dispositions of the people, as to suppose they would act in that manner. Your cause will soon come into honour; the restoration of long-lost rights will convert popular apathy into popular favour; and in their enthusiasm the people will forget that there are such things as erroneous teachers and neglect of discipline. Do I therefore dread your success, or stand aloof from you on the ground mentioned? Assuredly no. The truth is, that I think I can be of more service to you, by declining to be in your council. I have only to say, therefore,

Go on and prosper; though your beginnings have been but small, may your latter end greatly increase! You have my best wishes and prayers.

[*Extracted from the Anti-Patronage Reporter.*]

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No. X.

SPEECH AT THE MEETING OF THE ANTI-PATRONAGE SOCIETY, JANUARY 1834.

[*From a Newspaper Report.*]

Dr. M'Crie rose, and was received with great applause. He said he had stated at the last meeting of the Society, that he came as a volunteer, not as a voluntary; now he had to say, he came neither as a voluntary nor as a volunteer. His reluctance was not owing to any scruple of conscience, as if he stood on dangerous ground, or as if his appearance there contradicted his professed principles; for he knew that they would allow him to give such explanations as would guard it from the misconstructions of ignorance or prejudice. His reluctance was a matter of feeling. He felt he must condemn those Seceders, who, instead of preserving the attitude and holding fast the principles of their fathers, have changed with the times, and instead of seeking the reformation, aim at the destruction of the Establishment. He felt he must condemn the Establishment also, as liable to the same charge to which the Voluntary Seceders have exposed themselves, by retracting the testimony which it had long and loudly borne against the grievance of Patronage. He had also to dissent from a statement put forth in a late circular of the Society, that Patronage was the one ground on which the enemies of the Establishment can assail it. He was persuaded there were other grounds both as to doctrine and discipline. The sword of discipline had been drawn against those who had carried the doctrine of grace to an extreme, but those who had publicly contradicted that doctrine had been permitted to escape. He would not enter on the general question of Patronage. It was a disgrace to the country that it should be a question in the nineteenth century. The great topic now was popular rights, and the dread of these had thrown many good persons into a panic, including even many of the popular ministers, to the infinite delight of their opponents. Only in this way could he account for the manner in which one of the most distinguished persons in our country and church had spoken on the subject. Optimism was the very term that had been used to discredit his own proposed improvements; but never since the word was invented, was it more improperly applied than to a proposal which might be treated as common-place, but which it were ludicrous to represent as Utopian,—a proposal which, familiar in the annals of the Church, was revived as often as there was the least prospect of having a Parliament and an Assembly that should sympathize with the feelings of the country. On the one hand, he saw a Whig Ministry, which,

after effecting an important change on the political constitution of the country, by extending the elective franchise, and diminishing the civil patronage of the Crown, refuse to undo the fetters of the Church, or to relinquish any portion of its patronage in ecclesiastical matters. Refer the matter, they say, to the General Assembly. When the Reform Bill was before Parliament, what would have been thought had it been said, "Oh, let us wait till the county gentlemen have held their meetings; they know all about the matter; leave it to them to originate the plan." Or, when the Burgh Reform Bill was before the House, "Wait for the meeting of the Convention of Burghs!" On the other hand, we have the ministers of a Church which has long protested against the imposition of Patronage by the State, not only refusing to petition for its abolition, but actually trembling lest Parliament should grant the boon without being asked, and emancipate them against their will. It was easy to account for the conduct of the Ministry. Having relinquished much civil patronage, they find the Church useful to them as it stands—see its leaders not unwilling to remain their clients—and know that from the popular engrossment with political feelings and our religious divisions, there is little danger of their being overwhelmed with petitions. But how was it that all was lost on the minds of those who love the Church, and to whom her interests were dear? Why did it not shame them out of their unreasonable fears? They were afraid of agitation among the people. The agitation was all in their own breasts, or rather their disturbed fancies. Hence things were now confounded which were once acknowledged to be totally distinct. Patronage was now talked of as an essential part of our ecclesiastical constitution—not as a tower of observation erected by the enemy to overawe and annoy the garrison, but a bulwark of the citadel—not an antiquated and unsightly appendage to the building, but the apex of the structure. We must conceive, it seems, the Church of Scotland as a stately edifice, rising in spiral ambition until its head would be lost in the clouds, were it not for the figure of a patron planted in giddy eminence on its tip. Just as if the Board of Improvements (whose assessments, he confessed, he grudged more than the payment of minister's stipend) should, in noble contempt of the optimism of form, order to be placed on the top of St. Andrew's Church a gaunt figure of the thirteenth century, clad in mail, to look down upon the King, Lord Melville, and Mr. Pitt, and to compece the turbulence of anti-patronage agitators. But the people! the people! if we expel the patrons, the people will rush in like air into a vacuum, and raise such a storm, tempest, hurricane, as will root up and scatter every thing precious and venerable in our Church. Good friends! said the Reverend Doctor, be not so much alarmed—the period of ecclesiastical agitation is past—the popular mind has changed—the current has turned from religion to politics—and although you should join the Anti-Patronage Society, you could not bring it back to its old channel. Instead of rushing in, the people have been rushing out from you. You have told them that it is a delusion to think that the Christian people have an inherent right to choose their own minister, but to pacify them, you have added, that every man has the right

of choosing what minister he shall hear—and they have learned the lesson. The time may come when you will need all the assistance the people can give—when you will be fain to stimulate, instead of stifling their voice, and to ask their suffrages, instead of telling them that they are incapable of any thing but dumb and dogged resistance without the assignment of a reason. “I should rejoice in the breeze, but I dread the hurricane!” Very good for a landsman, who, projecting a pleasure sail in his trim and gilded barge to the Bass, or to the Isle of May, goes out in the morning with his telescope, and shakes his head on descreying a haze on the ocean; but not for the pilot who shall weather the storm. If you dread the hurricane, you will never enjoy the breeze, but may moor your frail bark under the shelter of some black and barren headland, or be contented timidly to creep along the shore, as before the invention of the compass, and while naval architecture was yet rude; and even there, when the storm rises, you may be stranded on the shore, or dashed upon the rocks; while the skillful mariner, trusting, under Providence, to the strength of his repaired bark, and the skill of his tried and hardy company, has launched boldly into the open sea, and, midst the howling of the tempest, and the cracking of the cordage, rides safely on the ridge of the mountain-wave. The Church of Scotland is essentially the people’s church. It is not a royal church nor a Parliamentary church. It is not the church of the aristocracy, nor of the patrons, nor of the clergy. If it had not been for the people, the Church would never have survived her persecutions; after the last standard-bearer had fallen, the banner of Presbytery was kept waving in the mountains of Scotland by the people, when there was not a minister who dared to dispense among them her ordinances. When it ceases to be the Church of the people, it ceases to be the Church of Scotland—its establishment is undermined. [This point the Reverend Doctor illustrated by reference to the words of the Act 1690.] There was no need for alarm at the expression, the People’s church. The people of Scotland know that, to preserve their liberty, it is necessary that they submit to authority—that authority which they recognise as scriptural. I will not, Sir, (continued he,) enter here in the Scripture argument for the right of the people; but permit me to say, that I am not a little surprised at the attempts which have been made of late, and by orthodox ministers too, to evade the force of that argument. If such a mode of reasoning as they have adopted should be followed out, farewell to the first-day Sabbath, to infant baptism, and to Presbytery. One reverend gentleman tells us, that perhaps the apostles alone nominated the two candidates (it is the first time I ever heard of candidates) for the apostleship; or that, perhaps, there were no more than two qualified to fill the office of Judas. If, Sir, the old *probabilities* of the schoolmen are in this manner to be introduced, why not say, perhaps the two candidates nominated themselves, or perhaps Peter alone nominated them, as the prime patron, as well as prime bishop, and that the plural number is used after the manner of kings and popes? When the same reverend author says that the five hundred brethren would have been convened, if it had been intended to furnish a pattern to the Church, in fu-

ture times, of popular election, I would just remind him of the Synod of Jerusalem, and the seven Independents in the Westminster Assembly. Let any person look into Calvin on the Acts, in reference to the election of Matthias and the deacons, and he will perceive the vast difference between a subtle controversialist and a sound commentator. If popular election was not practised in apostolic times, I challenge any person to show me, on the principles of human nature, or probability, if you will, how it could have been in practice, as ecclesiastical history declares it to have been, in the third and fourth centuries; when, during the interval, the distance between the people and the clergy, and the power of the latter over the former, were in a state of progressive increase. With respect to our Books of Discipline, great misconceptions exist among those who should have known better. We are told that the First Book of Discipline was never ratified by Parliament, just as if the Second Book had ever received that ratification. A reverend gentleman (Dr. Cook) is represented, in his reported speech in the late Assembly, to have said, that it "never obtained the sanction of the Church," and "that, in what respects the choice of ministers, it had not been carried into effect." The opposite of these statements is matter of undoubted history. Repeatedly it is mentioned, in Acts of Assembly, as an ecclesiastical standard, and its regulations as to the election of ministers ordered to be observed. No person who is duly acquainted with the state of matters at that period, and with the nature of the contest between the Court and the Church as to ecclesiastical livings, will allege that the communication from the General Assembly to Queen Mary, in 1565, is inconsistent with this statement, or that it proves that the ministers of the Church had altered either their sentiments or their practice from the time that the Book of Discipline had been adopted. The Queen either kept the benefices in her own hand, or she bestowed them on unworthy and unqualified persons, in the way of bargaining with them for the greater part of the stipend. The Assembly knew, and nobody doubts, that as long as the law stood, those who were admitted as ministers could not obtain a legal right to the benefice without a presentation from the Crown, or some other laic patron. What the Assembly needed and sought to obtain was, the power of admission; but was it obliged, in a letter to the Queen, to state all the rules which it had sanctioned and published respecting the mode of admission? The letter states, that it behoved the person presented to be tried by learned men, such as "the superintendents appointed thereto." And were not the superintendents appointed according to the Book of Discipline? did it not regulate their proceedings in this very matter? was not the giving of the nomination to the congregation one of these regulations? And had not the Assembly ordained, under the highest censures, "according to the fourth head of the Book of Discipline, that all persons serving in the ministry, who had not entered into their charges, according to the order appointed in the said Book, be inhibited;" and, in particular, "if they have not been presented by the people, or a part thereof, to the superintendent?" Those who would infer from the letter to the Queen, that the superin-

tendents could proceed to admission in the way of passing by the choice of the congregation, may, upon the same principle, infer from it, that these superintendents had the sole power of trial and examination; which every person slenderly acquainted with our church history knows they did not possess.

Another mistake generally prevalent is, that the First Book of Discipline was set aside by the Second. Had those who have avowed this opinion taken the trouble of previously looking into Calderwood, they would have been led into a train of inquiry which would have satisfied them, upon stronger evidence than his judgment, that they had taken up an erroneous notion. In many Acts of Assembly, after the reception of the Second Book, they would have found the First referred to, and acknowledged as an existing authority; and when I say that it is an authorized book to this day, I appeal, in proof of my assertion, to the Acts of Assembly approving of the Westminster Directory, and Form of Presbyterian Church Government. The Second Book was not intended to supersede or exauctorate its predecessor, but to explain more fully some points more generally stated in the other, and to introduce permanent regulations in place of certain others which are confessedly intended to be temporary. If it could be shown that the first of these documents contradicted the second, or that the latter laid down rules different from the former, as to the election of ministers, I would readily allow that the last declaration must be viewed as expressing the mind of the enacting authority. But I have yet to learn where there is any such contradiction or contrariety. The First Book is much more explicit on this head than the Second; and it is contrary to all the principles of sound legal interpretation, to set aside specific enactments in a law, under the idea that a general clause, briefly expressed, of another law contains doctrines inconsistent with them. Much of the confusion in which this point has been involved of late, might have been prevented by attending to the simple fact, that a threefold division of "ordinary vocation" was adopted by the compilers of the First Book, while the compilers of the Second adopted a twofold partition. I humbly think, that the "election and examination" of the first document are included under the "election" of the second. We are told, that "the judgment of the Eldership" is put before the "consent of the congregation;" I answer, that the judgment of the Eldership (that is, the Presbytery) precedes, accompanies, and follows the choice of the people. The Eldership judges in the way of licensing probationers; it judges, by limiting the choice of the people to its licentiates; it judges, by sending those to preach to the people; it judges, by sending one or more of its own number to moderate in a call; it judges of the regularity and validity of the call; and it judges again of the minister-elect, by subjecting him a second time to trials. No wonder that in a general statement, the "consent of the congregation" is mentioned last, though its proper place, in a fuller statement, would have been in the middle. But it is expressly declared to be an essential part of the "election," and it will not do, by a hypercritical exposition of the word *consent*, to reduce their choice to mere silence or inert acquiescence. What would a British House of Commons say, if

the Attorney-General, or some other legal functionary, were to stand up and tell them that all power resided in the king, and that all which belonged to them was quietly to acquiesce in his judgment, and in proof of this to read to them the words, 'Be it enacted by the King's Majesty, with the consent,' &c., which are found in every Act of Parliament? I have not the least hesitation in expressing my conviction, that the plan laid down in the First Book of Discipline, was that which was generally followed in the settlement of ministers down to the period of the obtrusion of Episcopacy by James VI. after he went to England. Your time will not permit to give proofs; I shall mention only one. - On the appointment of a second minister to Haddington, the Presbytery claimed the right of nomination, but Mr. James Carmichael produced the Act of Assembly 1562, which gave the nomination to the congregation, upon which the Presbytery withdrew its claim.

The Reverend Doctor concluded with apologizing for the length into which he had gone, and the freedom he had used, especially considering the position he occupied in relation to the Church to which the Society belonged. His only apology was his deep-rooted attachment to the Church of Scotland, by which he meant neither the Establishment nor that branch of the Secession with which he himself was connected; but the Church of Scotland in her reformed constitution, as delineated in her standards, and exemplified in the administration of a former age, with such accommodations, accordant with the Scriptures, as the altered state of the times may require. To the Church of Scotland, in this sense, he felt an attachment which was filial and devoted. He had been nursed in that feeling—it had grown with his growth and had strengthened with his strength, and the years which had passed over his head had not yet been able to abate it. He had read the deeds of her reformers and confessors at first with mere youthful curiosity. It had not been until he had satisfied himself that the system of doctrine and discipline they had introduced, was not more consonant to the oracles of truth than it was conducive to the best interests, temporal and spiritual, of the nation, that he had minutely studied their history. Then, he confessed, the fire began to burn, and he could not forbear to impart to others what he himself had felt. If his writings had commended themselves, in any degree, to any person, it was not owing to any talents or labour of his bestowed upon them, but solely to the feeling he had now expressed—a feeling of admiration, not for the men, for they are deceased and had given in their accounts, but for the grace and the gifts with which God had endowed them, and the fabric which they were honoured to rear. Viewing the Church of Scotland in her true principles, he felt himself bound to promote her interests in every way according to his power, and desired to say—"If I forget thee, let my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth."



## No. XI.

LIST OF DR. M'CRIE'S WRITINGS REFERRED TO IN  
THE LIFE.

- The Duty of Christian Societies towards each other, &c. A Sermon. Guthrie, Ogle and Constable. Pp. 40. (See Life, p. 40.)
- Statement of the Difference, &c. Ogle and Aikman, 1807. Pp. 234. (Life, p. 122.)
- Articles in the Christian Magazine, Life of Alexander Henderson, &c. (Life, p. 137.)
- Letters on the Catholic Bill. Letter First. Ogle and Aikman, 1807. Pp. 25. (Life, p. 141.)
- The Life of John Knox. 1st Edition, one vol. 8vo. Ogle and Blackwood, 1812. Pp. 582. 2d Edition, two vols. 8vo. William Blackwood, 1813. 6th Edition, one vol. 8vo. Blackwood, 1839. Pp. 539. (Life, p. 144.)
- Articles in Christian Instructor. (Life, Pp. 185, 191, 196, 213, 265, 280.)
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This volume cannot be read by the pious without sensible profit. It breathes the very spirit of ardent piety, and directs continually to CHRIST, as the only source of strength and growth in grace. The kind of faith here inculcated, is not a cold rational assent to general propositions, but a cordial, living principle of action, the exercise of which is commonly accompanied with a sweet persuasion of pardon and acceptance. Nothing animates and encourages the pious soul in its spiritual pilgrimage so much, as the smiles of the great Captain of Salvation.—*Bib. Rep. Princeton*.















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